A CENTURY OF ENGLISH SANCTITY

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INTRODUCTION

It is often asserted, especially by Roman Catholics, that the earliest form of Christianity in the British Isles was Roman Catholicism. However, this is not true. Until the middle of the eleventh century, the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Western Roman Church were united and confessed essentially the same faith - Orthodox Christianity. Thus the characteristically Roman Catholic doctrines of the infallibility of the pope, the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, purgatory, indulgences and created grace, only became established in the West after the western schism of 1054. It follows that the Church that existed in the British Isles until the schism was *the Orthodox Church.*

The history of the Orthodox Church in the British Isles up to the Western schism can be roughly divided into five periods:

A. The Apostolic Period (1st century).
B. The Roman Period (to 410).
C. The Celtic Period (5th to 7th centuries).
D. The Early Anglo-Saxon Period (7th to 9th centuries).
E. The Later Anglo-Saxon Period (9th to 11th centuries).

A. The Apostolic Period. Little is known about the apostolic period in British Church history. Various traditions that are difficult to confirm relate that the Apostles Peter, Paul and Simon the Zealot came to the British Isles. A stronger tradition exists that the Apostle of the Seventy Aristobulus, the brother of St. Barnabas, was sent to Britain by St. Paul and became the first Orthodox bishop in the islands. According to the Greek Synaxarion, he was martyred by "savage Britons". There is also a strong tradition that St. Joseph of Arimathaea came to England via the Balearic Isles and settled in what is now the town of Glastonbury, where he founded a small monastic community and built the first church dedicated to the Mother of God in the whole of the West. This church, built of wood and wattles, survived for over a thousand years until it was burned down in the 12th century. St. Joseph is also reported as having brought with him an icon of the Mother of God which was destroyed in the Protestant Reformation, and a staff which, when planted in the ground, grew into a tree. This was cut down at the Reformation, but cuttings from it were re-planted, and continue to flower this day on Old Calendar Christmas Day (December 25 / January 7). St. Joseph died in about 82, bringing the apostolic period to an end.

B. The Roman Period. Late in the second century, a local British king called Lucius asked the Roman Pope Eleutherius to send missionaries to his land - evidently the seed planted by the Apostles was on the point of dying out. Missionaries came, and built churches in London, Glastonbury and other places. The faith revived, and in about 209 the first recorded British martyr, Alban, was killed for the faith in the Roman city of

Verulamium (now St. Albans). In the third century, both Tertullian and Origen mention the existence of the Church in Britain. However, physical evidence for the growth of British Christianity is sparse until late in the fourth century, when the first stone church in the British Isles was built in Southern Scotland by St. Ninian. Archaeologists have also discovered the remains of small house churches in Roman villas in the south of England, together with some Christian frescoes and church utensils (baptismal fonts, church plate, etc.). Towards the end of the Roman period, there were several rebellions by the leaders of the Roman armies in Britain against Rome, and in 410 the Emperor Honorius finally withdrew the Roman legions from "the Roman island", as St. Jerome called it.

C. The Celtic Period. Left to themselves, the British Roman Christians were able to maintain their way of life, albeit at a lower material level, for about half a century. However, the invasions of the Angles and Saxons from the continent, and of the Irish and Picts from the north, gradually led to a disintegration of British Christian life. Many fled west, to the mountains of Wales, where the beginnings of what is now called the Celtic Church were formed. At the same time, a British Christian, St. Patrick, founded the Orthodox Church of Ireland. The famous British King Arthur defeated the invading Saxons several times, guaranteeing a period of peace in the early sixth century. However, by the middle of the century, the advance of the pagan Saxons began again, and the British monk St. Gildas, in his work *On the Destruction of Britain,* castigated the sinful life of the kings and priests of Britain, blaming them for the disaster. Paradoxically, however, it is at this time that the golden age of the Celtic Church begins, with many holy monastic saints glorifying the Churches of Wales, South-West England, Scotland, Ireland and Brittany (in north-west France). The earliest full-length *life* of a British saint, St. Samson, Bishop of Dol, was written in about 600, and early in the eighth century St. Adomnan, Abbot of Iona, wrote the famous *Life of St. Columba* (+597), the apostle of Scotland. The Church of Ireland flourished through extensive contacts and exchanges with the Coptic Church of Egypt. And many Irish monks, not content to remain in their own lands, initiated a great missionary movement in all directions - to the south and east, where they founded many monasteries in Western and Central Europe, to the north, where they penetrated to Iceland, Greenland and North-West Russia (Celtic symbols have been found at Valaam monastery), and even to the west (Irish inscriptions have been found in Newfoundland in Canada and Virginia in the United States). Early in the seventh century Irish monks from the great Scottish monastery of Iona led by St. Aidan, Bishop of Lindisfarne, set about converting the Angles of Southern Scotland and Northern England. There they encountered Roman missionaries sent by St. Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, who had started a very successful mission in Southern England in 597 under the leadership of St. Augustine, first archbishop of Canterbury. The Roman and Irish monks had different practices with regard to baptism, the monastic tonsure and the date of Pascha, and a Council was held at Whitby in Yorkshire in 664 to resolve these differences. The Council decided to accept the Roman-Byzantine practices and

calendar. However, some Celtic churchmen resisted these changes, while the Church of Wales went into schism for over a century... The Celtic Churches continued in existence for several more centuries, but from the eighth century the focus shifts from them to their Anglo-Saxon converts...

D. The Early Anglo-Saxon Period. In the period 597 to 664, most of England was converted to Orthodoxy by Irish and Roman missionaries (with help from France), and by the second half of the seventh century the Anglo-Saxons were producing great saints of their own, such as St. Wilfrid, Bishop of York, and St. Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne. An important part in this remarkably rapid process of conversion - comparable only, perhaps, to the conversion of the Russians four centuries later - was contributed by a Greek, St. Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, who organized the diocesan and parish system of the new Anglo-Saxon Church, gave her a penitential discipline and founded an important school for the study of Greek, Latin and the ecclesiastical sciences in Canterbury. Another important school of learning was founded in the north, where the holy monk known as the Venerable Bede (+735) wrote theological treatises, commentaries on many books of the Bible, lives of the saints, and a famous *History of the English Church and People*. He also made the first translation of the Gospel of St. John into Anglo-Saxon. In the middle of the eighth century, hundreds of English monks and nuns poured across the English Channel to preach the Gospel to their brethren on the continent. Under the inspired leadership of the English St. Boniface, Archbishop of Mainz and Apostle of Germany (+755), many monasteries were built in the thick woods of Germany, bringing forth abundant fruit to Christ. However, towards the end of the century, sign of decay appeared in the English Church, and in 793 the Vikings of Scandinavia attacked and destroyed the great monastery of Lindisfarne. During the course of the next eighty years, all of the seven English kingdoms fell prey to the Viking armies until, in the winter of 877-78, with the English King Alfred in hiding and most of the English monasteries destroyed and their monks and nuns killed or raped, it looked as if English Christian civilization had come to an end&

E. The Later Anglo-Saxon Period. However, in one of the most astonishing reversals in Christian history, King Alfred, inspired by a vision from St. Cuthbert, emerged from his hiding place, defeated the Danish "Great Army" and baptised their king. Then, almost single-handedly, he proceeded to resurrect English Orthodox Christianity and statehood, even translating church books from Latin into English and sending them to his bishops. In the tenth century the English recovery continued under Alfred's successors, until, by the 970s, the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom, uniting Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and Danish populations, emerged as probably the most powerful and civilized country in Western Europe. However, in 979 the young King Edward "the Martyr" was killed, marking the beginning of the end of Anglo-Saxon England. The Vikings invaded again, and in 1016 they conquered the whole country while the English Royal Family went into exile in France. However, the Danish King Canute,

who ruled Denmark and Norway as well as England, was converted to the faith of his new subjects, and did not hinder the conversion of Scandinavia by English missionaries. Finally, in 1042, the last descendant of the old English royal line, St. Edward "the Confessor", returned from exile and was anointed king. During his reign, in 1052, the English Church was excommunicated by the Pope of Rome, who was then himself excommunicated by the Great Church of Constantinople in 1054.

In January, 1066, King Edward died, having prophesied the fall of Orthodox England. Almost immediately, the Viking Duke William of Normandy laid claim to the throne. When the English people rejected his claim and elected King Edward's brother-in-law Harold instead, William appealed to the Pope, who blessed him to invade "schismatic" England and its unlawful king. On October 14, in a desperate battle that lasted all day, the Normans defeated the English at Hastings and killed King Harold. In January, 1067 William was crowned in London as the first Catholic king of England, and proceeded to destroy English Orthodox civilization to its foundations, killing perhaps twenty percent of the population - the first genocide in European history. Most of the English aristocracy fled to Constantinople, where the Emperor Alexis gave them a basilica in which to worship and enrolled them in his army. Harold's daughter, Gytha, fled to Kiev, where she married Great Prince Vladimir Monomakh.

Thus ended the history of the Anglo-Saxon Orthodox Church. The fact that its remnants fled, not to heretical Rome, but to the Orthodox capitals of Constantinople and Kiev, showed that their faith was the same as that of the Orthodox East. The lives of the saints included this book provide further evidence that Britain until the time of the western schism in the eleventh century was Orthodox Christian.

This book is a collection of 100 lives of saints who struggled in England in the Orthodox period of her history – that is, before the Norman Conquest of 1066. Their sanctity is witnessed by their presence on pre-Conquest calendars or whose pre-Conquest cult is testified in other documents such as *The Resting Places of the Saints*. Most are English, but several are foreigners who came and died here, or whose relics came to rest here permanently. Saints who died in the Channel Islands, the Scilly Isles or the Isle of Man are included, as well as saints who, while dying abroad, spent most of their life or activity in England. Also included are St. Olaf of Norway and St. Sigfrid of Sweden because of their close association with, and membership of, the English Church. However, other saints who died in other parts of the British Isles, in Brittany, or on the Dutch or German mission-fields are not included. Also excluded are the long lives of major saints which have already been published in good English translations, such as Cuthbert, Wilfrid and Guthlac. In the appendices are lives of the major uncanonized saint, Alfred the Great, whose contribution to English Orthodoxy was so great, and the saints of the major Celtic monastic centres of Iona in Scotland and St. David in Wales, whose links with

English Orthodoxy were also very strong.

The aim of the book is to give a panorama of the sanctity of Orthodox England, and to stimulate the veneration of saints who are little known even in England.

Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us!

August 5/18, 2021.
Holy Martyr-King Oswald of Northumbria.
137 Woking Road, Guildford, Surrey. GU1 1QX.

1. SAINTS ACCA AND ALCMUND, BISHOPS OF HEXHAM

Our holy Father Acca as a young man joined the household of Bosa, bishop of York, and later became a disciple of the great St. Wilfrid, bishop of York and later of Hexham. For thirteen years he accompanied his teacher on his journeys through England and on the continent, and was a witness at his holy repose. And when Wilfrid died, in 709, he became his successor as abbot and bishop of Hexham in Northumbria.

The Venerable Bede called Acca "the dearest and best loved of all bishops on this earth." Bede also praised his theological library and dedicated several of his works to him. On becoming bishop of Hexham Acca completed three of Wilfrid's smaller churches and splendidly adorned his cathedral at Hexham, providing it with ornaments of gold, silver and precious stones, and decorating the altars with purple and silk. Moreover, he invited an excellent singer called Maban who had been taught church harmony at Canterbury to teach himself and the people. He himself was a chanter of great skill.

In 732 Acca either retired or was expelled from his see, and later became bishop of Whithorn in Southern Scotland. He died on October 20, 740, and was buried near the east wall of his cathedral in Hexham. Parts of two stone crosses which were placed at his tomb still survive.

In about 1030, Alfred Westow, a Hexham priest and a sacrist at Durham, translated the relics of St. Acca, following a Divine revelation, to a place of more fitting honour in the church. At that time the saint's vestments were found in all their pristine freshness and strength, and were displayed by the brethren of the church for the veneration of the faithful. Above his chest was found a portable altar with the inscription Almae Trinitati, agiae Sophiae, sanctae Mariae. This also was the object of great veneration. Many miracles were wrought through this saint. Those attempting to infringe the sanctuary of his church were driven off in a wondrous and terrible manner, and those who tried to steal relics were prevented from doing so.

A brother of the church by the name of Aldred related the following story. When he was an adolescent and was living in the house of his brother, a priest, he was once asked by his brother to keep an eye on some relics of St. Acca which he had wrapped in a cloth and laid on the altar of St. Michael in the southern porch of the church. Then it came into the mind of Aldred that a certain church (we may guess that it was Durham) would be greatly enriched by the bones of St. Acca. So, after prostrating himself on the ground and praying the seven penitential psalms, he entered the porch with the intention of taking them away. Suddenly he felt heat as of fire which thrust him back in great trepidation. Thinking that he had approached with insufficient reverence and preparation, he again prostrated himself and poured forth still more ardent prayers to the Lord. But on approaching a second time he felt a still fiercer heat opposing him. Realizing that his intention was not in accordance with the will of God,

he withdrew.

Our holy Father Alcmund was bishop of Hexham from 767 to 781, reposed on September 7, 781, and was buried next to St. Acca. In 1032, he appeared by night to a certain very pious man by the name of Dregmo who lived near the church at Hexham. Wearing pontifical vestments and holding a pastoral staff in his hand, he nudged Dregmo with it and said:

"Rise, go to Alfred, son of Westow, a priest of the Church of Durham, and tell him to transfer my body from this place to a more honourable one within the church. For it is fitting that those whom the King of kings has vested with a stole of glory and immortality in the heavens should be venerated by those on earth."

Dregmo asked: "Lord, who are you?"

He replied: "I am Alcmund, bishop of the Church of Hexham, who was, by the grace of God, the fourth after blessed Wilfrid to be in charge of this place. My body is next to that of my predecessor, the holy bishop Acca of venerable memory. You also be present at its translation with the priest."

After saying this, he disappeared. The next morning, Dregmo went to the priest Alfred and related everything in order. He joyfully assembled the people, told them what had happened, and fixed a day for the translation. On the appointed day they lifted the bones from the tomb, wrapped them in linen and placed them on a bier; but since the hour for celebrating the Divine Liturgy had passed, they placed the holy relics in the porch of St. Peter at the western end of the church, intending to transfer them the following day with psalms and hymns and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

But that night, the priest Alfred, who was keeping vigil with his clerics around the holy body, rose when the others were sleeping and took a part of the finger of the saint, intending to give it to the Church of Durham. The next morning a great multitude came to the translation. But when the priest and those with him came to lift the body, it was immovable. Thinking themselves unworthy, they retired, and others came up. But they, too, were unable to lift it. When no-one was found who could lift it, the people looked at each other in consternation, while the priest, still ignorant that he was the cause, exhorted them to pray to God to reveal who was to blame for this. That night, St. Alcmund appeared a second time to Dregmo, who had suddenly been overwhelmed with sleep, and with a stern face said to him:

"What is this that you have wanted to do? Did you think to bring me back into the church mutilated, when I served God and St. Andrew here in wholeness of body and spirit? Go, therefore, and witness in the presence of all the people that what has unwisely been taken away from my body should be restored, or else you will never be able to remove me from this place in which I now am."

And when he had said this, he showed him his hand with part of the finger missing. The next day, Dregmo stood in the middle of the people and told them all that had been revealed to him in the night, vehemently urging that the person who had presumed to do this should be punished. Then the priest, perceiving that he was at fault, prostrated himself in the midst of the people and revealed to them the motives for which he had committed the crime. Begging for forgiveness, he restored that which he had taken away. Then the clerics who were present came up and without any effort lifted the holy body and transferred it into the church on August 6.

Later, Alfred translated a portion of the relics of Saints Acca and Alcmund, together with portions of the relics of the other Northumbrian saints: the hermits Baldred and Bilfrid, the Martyr-King Oswin, St. Boisil of Melrose, St. Ebba of Coldingham and the Venerable Bede, to his church of Durham.

St. Acca is commemorated on October 20.

Holy Fathers Acca and Alcmund, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*; Eddius Stephanus, *Life of St. Wilfrid*; Simeon of Durham *Opera Omnia*, ed. T. Arnold, Rolls Series, 1882-85, vol. II, pp. 36-37, 51-52; *History of the Church of Durham*, ch. 42; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1978, pp. 1-2, 10; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, p. 358)

2. SAINT ADRIAN, ABBOT OF CANTERBURY

Our holy Father Adrian was a Greek-speaking aristocrat from Libya Cyrenaica who fled Africa during the Arab invasions of the 640s and settled in Campania. Entering a monastery, he acquired a good secular and ecclesiastical education, and mastery of the Latin language. Emperor Constans II sent him twice on diplomatic bishops to Gaul, perhaps to forge a Franko-Byzantine alliance against the Arabs and Lombards. He was abbot of a monastery on the island of Nisida (or Nerida) in the Gulf of Naples when Pope Vitalian called on him to accept the see of Canterbury. However, St. Adrian declined, saying he was unworthy of so exalted a rank, and suggested instead the elderly monk Theodore, a native of Tarsus in Cilicia. The pope accepted his suggestion, but only on condition that he accompanied St. Theodore to England. For, as Bede says, "he had already travelled twice through Gaul on various missions and was therefore better acquainted with the road and had an adequate number of followers; also, being a fellow labourer in his teaching work, he would take great care to prevent Theodore from introducing into the church over which he presided any Greek customs which might be contrary to the true faith [Bede probably means the Monothelite heresy then raging in the East]. So on May 27, 668 Saints Theodore and Adrian set off together for England. They went by sea to Marseilles and then by land to Arles. They were detained for some time in France by Ebroin, Mayor of the palace of Neustria, who suspected them of being agents of the Byzantine emperor. However, on May 27, 669 the two saints arrived in Canterbury.

St. Theodore immediately placed St. Adrian in charge of the monastery of St. Peter in Canterbury, where he taught Greek and Latin and all the ecclesiastical sciences, educating a whole generation of English churchmen. He reposed on January 9, 710, and his tomb was glorified by miracles. In 1091, when repairs were being carried out to the church buildings in Canterbury, his tomb was opened and his body was found to be incorrupt.

St. Adrian is commemorated on January 9.

Holy Father Adrian, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, IV, 1,2; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 3; Andrew Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes, Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, Ad 590-752,* E-book, p. 176)

3. SAINTS AIDAN, FINAN, EDBERT, EDFRITH AND ETHILWALD, BISHOPS OF LINDISFARNE

The Venerable Bede writes:- "As soon as he became king of Northumbria, the holy martyr-king Oswald greatly wished that all the people whom he ruled should be imbued with the grace of the Christian Faith, of which he had received such signal proof in his victory over the heathen. So he sent to the Scottish elders among whom he and his companions had received the sacrament of Baptism when in exile, asking them to send him a bishop by whose teaching and ministry the English people over whom he ruled might receive the blessings of the Christian Faith and the sacraments. His request was granted without delay, and they sent him Bishop Aidan, a man of outstanding gentleness, holiness, and moderation. He had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, in that he kept Pascha in accordance with the customs of his own nation... For the northern province of the Scots and all the Picts still observed these customs, believing that they were following the teachings of the holy and praiseworthy father Anatolius, although the true facts are evident to any scholar. But the Scots in the south of Ireland had already conformed to the injunctions of the Bishop of the apostolic see, and learnt to observe Pascha at the canonical time.

"On Aidan's arrival, the king appointed the island of Lindisfarne to be his see at his own request. As the tide ebbs and flows, this place is surrounded by sea twice a day like an island, and twice a day the sand dries and joins it to the mainland. The king always listened humbly and readily to Aidan's advice and diligently set himself to establish and extend the Church of Christ throughout his kingdom. And while the bishop, who was not fluent in the English language, preached the Gospel, it was most delightful to see the king himself interpreting the word of God to his ealdormen and thanes; for he himself had obtained perfect command of the Scottish tongue during his long exile. Henceforward many Scots arrived day by day in Britain and proclaimed the word of God with great devotion in all the provinces under Oswald's rule, while those of them who were in priest's orders ministered the grace of Baptism to those who believed, Churches were built in several places, and the people flocked gladly to hear the word of God, while the king of his bounty gave lands; endowments were made to establish monasteries, and the English, both noble and simple, were instructed by their Scottish teachers to observe the monastic life.

"For most of those who came to preach were monks. Aidan himself being a monk sent from the island of Hii [Iona], whose monastery was for a long time the principal monastery of nearly all the northern Irish and all the Picts and exercised a widespread authority. The island itself belongs to Britain, and is separated from the mainland only by a narrow strait; but the Picts living in that part of Britain gave it to the Irish monks long ago, because they received the Faith of Christ through their preaching.

"It was from this island and from this community of monks… that Aidan was sent, when he had been made bishop, to preach the Faith of Christ to a province of the English. Among other evidences of holy life, he gave his clergy an inspiring example of self-discipline and continence, and the highest recommendation of his teaching to all was that he and his followers lived as they taught. He never sought or cared for any worldly possessions, and loved to give away to the poor who chanced to meet him whatever he received from kings or wealthy folk. Whether in town or country, he always travelled on foot unless compelled by necessity to ride; and whatever people he met on his walks, whether high or low, he stopped and spoke to them. If they were heathen, he urged them to be baptized; and if they were Christian~ he strengthened their faith, and inspired them by word and deed to live a good life and to be generous to others.

"His life is in marked contrast to the apathy of our own times, for all who walked with him, whether monks or layfolk, were required to meditate, that is, either to read the Scriptures or to learn the Psalms. This was their daily occupation wherever they went; and if, on rare occasions, he was invited to dine with the king, he went with one or two clerics, and when he had eaten sparingly, he left as soon as possible to read or pray with them. Many devout men and women of that day were inspired to follow his example, and adopted the practice of fasting until the Ninth Hour on Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year, except during the fifty days after Pascha. If wealthy people did wrong, he never kept silent out of respect or fear, but corrected them outspokenly. Nor would he offer money to influential people, although he offered them food whenever he entertained them as host. But, if the wealthy ever gave him gifts of money, he either distributed it for the needs of the poor, as I have mentioned, or else used it ransom any who had been unjustly sold as slaves. Many of those whom he had ransomed in this way later became his disciples; and when they had been instructed and trained he ordained, them to the priesthood.

"It is said that when King Oswald originally asked the Scots to send a bishop to teach the faith of Christ to himself and his people, they sent him another man of a more austere disposition. After some time, meeting with no success in his preaching to the English, who refused to listen to him, he returned home and reported to his superiors that he had been unable to achieve anything by teaching to the nation to whom they had sent him, because they were an ungovernable people of an obstinate and barbarous temperament. The Scots fathers therefore held a great conference to decide- on the wisest course of action; for while they regretted that the preacher whom they had sent had not been acceptable to the English, they still wished to meet their desire for salvation. Then Aidan, who was present at the conference, said to the priest whose efforts had been unsuccessful: 'Brother, it seems to me that you were too severe on your ignorant hearers. You should have followed the practice of the apostles, and begun by giving them the milk of simpler teaching, and gradually nourished them with the word of God until

they were capable of greater perfection and able to follow the loftier precepts of Christ. At this the faces and eyes of all who were at the conference were turned towards him; and they paid close attention to all he said, and realized that here was a fit person to be made bishop and sent to instruct the ignorant and unbelieving, since he was particularly endowed with the grace of discretion, the mother of virtues. They therefore consecrated him bishop, and sent him to preach. Time was to show that Aidan was remarkable not only for discretion, but for the other virtues as well."

"Almighty God made known the greatness of Aidan's merits by the evidence of miracles, of which it must suffice to mention three in his memory. A priest named Utta, a truthful and serious man, who on that account was generally respected by all, even by worldly princes, was sent to Kent to bring back Eanfled as wife for King Oswy: she was the daughter of King Edwin and had been taken to Kent when her father was killed. Intending to make the outward journey by land and to return with the princess by sea, he went to Bishop Aidan and asked him to pray for him and his companions as they set out on their long journey. When Aidan had blessed them and commended them to God, he gave them some holy oil, saying: When you set sail, you will encounter a storm and contrary winds. Remember then to pour the oil that I am giving you on to the sea, and the wind will immediately drop, giving you a pleasant, calm voyage and safe return home. ·Everything happened as the bishop foretold. In a rising gale, the sailors dropped anchor, hoping to ride out the storm. This proved impossible; for the roaring seas broke into the ship from every side, and it began to fill. Everyone felt that his last hour had come, when at last the priest remembered the bishop's words. He took out the flask of oil, and poured some of it over the sea, which immediately ceased its raging as Aidan had foretold. So it came about that the man of God through the spirit of prophecy both foretold the storm and, although absent, calmed its fury. The story of this miracle is no groundless fable; for it was related to me by a most faithful priest of our own church, who had it from the mouth of the priest Utta, on and through whom the miracle was performed,

"Another notable miracle of the same father Aidan is told by those in a position to know the facts. While he was bishop, Penda and his enemy army of Mercians spread ruin far and wide throughout the lands of the Northumbrians and reached the very gates of the royal city, which takes its name from Ebba, a former queen. Unable to enter it either by force or after a siege, Penda attempted to set fire to it. Pulling down all the neighbouring villages, he carried to Bamburgh a vast quantity of beams, rafters, wattled walls, and thatched roofs, piling it high around the city wall on the landward side. Directly the wind became favourable, he set fire to this mass, intending to destroy the city. Now, while all this was happening, the most reverend Bishop Aidan was living on Farne island, which lies nearly two miles from the city and which was his retreat when he wished to pray alone and undisturbed: indeed, his lonely hermitage can be seen there to this day.

"When the saint saw the column of smoke and flame wafted by the winds above the city walls, he is said to have raised his eyes and hands to heaven, saying with tears: 'Lord, see what evil Penda does!' No sooner had he spoken than the wind shifted away from the city, and drove back the flames on to those who had kindled them, so injuring some and unnerving all that they abandoned their assault on a city so clearly under God's protection:

"Death came to Aidan when he had completed sixteen years of his episcopate, while he was staying at a royal residence near the capital [in the year 651]. Having a church and lodging there, Aidan often used to go and stay at the place, travelling about the surrounding countryside to preach. This was his practice at all the king's countryseats, for he had no personal possessions except his church and a few fields around it. When he fell ill, a tent was erected for him on the west side of the church, so that the tent was actually attached to the church wall. And so it happened that, as he drew his last breath, he was leaning against a post that buttressed the wall on the outside. [This post can still be seen in St. Aidan's church in Bamburgh.] He passed away on the last day of August, in the seventeenth year of his episcopate, and his body was soon taken across to Lindisfarne Island and buried in the monks' cemetery. When a larger church, dedicated to the most blessed Prince of the Apostles, was built there some while later, his bones were transferred to it and buried at the right side of the altar in accordance with the honours due to so great a prelate.

"Finan, who had also come from the Scottish island and monastery of Iona, succeeded him as bishop and held the office for a considerable time. Some years later, Penda, King of the Mercians, came to these parts with an invading army and destroyed everything that he found with fire and sword; and he burned down the village and the church where Aidan had died. But in a wonderful mariner, the beam against which he was leaning at his death was the only object untouched by the flames which devoured everything around it. This miracle was noticed and a church was soon rebuilt on the same site, with the beam supporting the structure from the outside as before. Sometime later in another fire, caused this time by carelessness, the village and church were again destroyed, but even on this occasion the beam remained undamaged. For, although in a most extraordinary way the flames licked through the very holes of the pins that secured it to the building, they were not permitted to destroy the beam. When the church was rebuilt for the third time, the beam was not employed as an outside support again, but was set up inside the church as a memorial of this miracle, so that those who entered might kneel there and ask God's mercy. Since that day many are known to have obtained the grace of healing at this spot, and many have cut chips of wood from the beam and put them in water, by which means many have been cured of their diseases."

St. Aidan's body was translated to Lindisfarne. He is commemorated on August 31 and October 8.

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Our holy Father Finan was an Irishman trained on Iona who succeeded St. Aidan as bishop of Lindisfarne in 651. A zealous and learned bishop, he worked closely with King Oswy of Northumbria and sponsored the important missions to Mercia and Essex. He reposed in 661 and is commemorated on February 17.

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Our holy Father Edbert became bishop of Lindisfarne in 688. A very learned and generous man, he gave a tenth of his livestock, grain, fruit and clothing to the poor every year. Every year, like his predecessor, he would retire for the whole of Great Lent to the island of Farne in the North Sea. During Lent in the year 698, he told the monks to uncover the relics of St. Cuthbert, which were found to be completely incorrupt. Then they brought some of the garments that had clothed the holy body to St. Edbert in Farne, and he, kissing them, said:

"Let the body be put into new garments in place of those you have brought, and so lay it into the coffin you have provided. For I am certain that the place will not long remain empty, having been sanctified with so many miracles of heavenly grace. And how happy is he to whom our Lord, the Author and Giver of all bliss, shall grant the privilege of lying in the same."

Having said this and much more with many tears and great humility, the bishop told the brothers to depart and do as he had commanded them. And when they had dressed the body in new garments, and laid it in a new coffin, they placed it on the pavement of the sanctuary. Soon after, Bishop Edbert fell ill, and on May 6, 698 he departed to the Lord. And they laid his body in the grave of St. Cuthbert, placing over it the coffin containing the incorrupt relics of that saint. And many miracles testified to the holiness of both saints. In 875 his relics were carried with those of St. Cuthbert through Northumbria until they found rest in Durham in 995. He is commemorated on May 6.

*

St. Edbert was succeeded as bishop by St. Edfrith, who had studied in Ireland and was an accomplished scribe, artist and calligrapher. It is probably he who wrote the famous Northumbrian Gospels, which are now in the British Museum, in honour of St. Cuthbert. To him was dedicated the Anonymous life of St. Cuthbert, and he it was who invited the Venerable Bede to write his life of the same saint. He restored from the foundations the oratory in which St. Cuthbert had struggled on Farne. He died in 721 and was buried near St. Cuthbert's tomb. His relics, too, were taken round Northumbria together with those of St. Cuthbert and laid to rest in Durham in 995. In

1104 his relics were translated with St. Cuthbert's into the new cathedral in Durham. He is commemorated on June 4 together with all the early bishops of Lindisfarne.

*

St. Edfrith was succeeded by St. Ethilwald, a Northumbrian who became a monk, and later prior and abbot, at Melrose. He was a disciple of St. Cuthbert. He caused a stone cross to be made, the top of which was broken off by the pagans when they destroyed the church at Lindisfarne. However, the top was reunited to the rest of the cross with lead, and was later always carried about together with the bodies of St. Cuthbert and his successors, "and honourably regarded by the people of Northumbria out of regard to these two holy men" (Simeon of Durham). St. Ethilwald reposed in 740. In the tenth century his relics were translated to Westminster by King Edgar. He is commemorated on February 12 and April 21.

Holy Fathers Aidan, Finan, Edbert, Edfrith and Ethilwald, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* book III *Life of St. Cuthbert*; Simeon of Durham, *History of the Church of Durham*; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p, p. 6-7, 117, 119, 142, 150; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 342, 354-355)

4. SAINT ALBAN, PROTOMARTYR OF BRITAIN, AND MARTYRS JULIUS AND AARON OF CAERLEON

The martyrdom of St. Alban, the protomartyr of Britain, was said to have taken place during the Diocletian persecution, but scholars think it more probably took place on June 22, 209 during the rule of the Caesar Geta, the younger son of the Emperor Septimius Severus, who was campaigning against the Scots at that time. Alban was probably a high-born native of Verulamium, now St. Alban's, and a Roman citizen.

"This Alban," writes the Venerable Bede in the eighth century, "who was as yet a pagan, received into his house a certain priest fleeing from persecution at the time when the commands of the heathen emperors were raging against the Christians. Seeing that this man applied himself night and day to constant prayer and vigils, and influenced by God's grace, he began to imitate his example of faith and piety. Gradually he was taught by the man's salutary encouragement, and relinquishing the darkness of idolatry became a whole-hearted Christian. While the aforementioned priest was being entertained in his house for some days, news reached the ears of the impious prince that one of Christ's confessors, for whom the role of martyr had not yet been assigned, was lying low in the house of Alban. As a result he straight away ordered soldiers to make a careful search for him. When they came to the martyr's cottage, St Alban soon showed himself to the soldiers in place of his guest and mentor, dressed in the man's clothes, the hooded cloak that he wore, and was led off to the judge in bonds. It happened that at the time Alban was brought to him the judge was offering sacrifices to the pagan gods at the altars. When he saw Alban, he became enflamed with anger at the fact that Alban had ventured to offer himself of his own free will to the soldiers in place of the guest he had harboured, and thus to expose himself to danger . He ordered him to be dragged to the images of the gods before which he stood and said: `Since you preferred to conceal that profane rebel rather than surrender him to the soldiers so that he might pay the penalty he deserves for his blasphemy and contempt of the gods, you will suffer the penalty for which he was due if you attempt to reject the rites of our religion.' But St Alban, who had voluntarily given himself up to the persecutors as a Christian, was not in the least afraid of the prince's threats. Rather, being girded with the armour of spiritual warfare, he openly declared he would not obey his commands. Then the judge said: `Of what house and stock are you?' Alban replied: `What business is it of yours of what lineage I am born? If on the other hand you desire to hear the truth of my religion, know that I am now a Christian and devote myself to Christian service.' The judge said: `I seek your name, so tell me it without delay.' The other replied: `The name given me by my parents is Alban, and I revere and ever worship the true living God, Who created all things.' Then, filled with anger, the judge said: you wish to enjoy the blessings of a long life, do not refuse to offer sacrifice to the great gods.' Alban replied: `These sacrifices which you offer to the pagan gods can neither help their recipients nor

fulfil the wishes and desires of those praying. Rather, whoever offers sacrifice to these images shall receive as his reward the eternal punishment of Hell.' When the judge heard this, he was roused to great fury and ordered the holy confessor of God to be beaten by the torturers in the belief that since words had failed, he could weaken the constancy of his heart with the lash. Though afflicted in most cruel torture, AIban bore it with patience and even with joy for God's sake, and when the judge realised that he could not be overcome by torture or enticed from the rites of the Christian religion, he ordered him to be beheaded.

"As he was being led to his death, Alban came to a river which separated the town from the place of his execution by its very swift course. There he saw a large crowd of people, both men and women of all ages and social class, who were clearly drawn by divine impulse to follow the blessed confessor and martyr. They filled the bridge over the river to such an extent that they could scarcely all get over before nightfall. Indeed since almost all had gone forth, the judge was left in the city without any attendants. So, St Alban, in whose mind was a burning desire to come quickly to his martyrdom, approached the torrent, and raising his eyes to heaven, he saw the bed of the river instantly dry up and the water withdraw and make a path for his steps. When the executioner himself saw this along with others, he hastened to meet Alban when he came to the place appointed for his execution, doubtless urged on in this by divine impulse. Casting away the sword he held ready drawn, he threw himself at his feet and earnestly desired that he himself be thought worthy of being executed either with the martyr he was ordered to slay or in his place . . .

"So while he was turned from a persecutor into a companion in the true faith, and while there was a very proper hesitation among the other executioners in taking up the sword which lay on the ground, the most reverend confessor ascended the hill with the crowds. This hill lay about five hundred paces from the arena, and, as was fitting, it was fair, shining and beautiful, adorned, indeed clothed, on all sides with wild flowers of every kind; nowhere was it steep or precipitous or sheer but Nature had provided it with wide, long-sloping sides stretching smoothly down to the level of the plain. In fact its natural beauty had long fitted it as a place to be hallowed by the blood of a blessed martyr. When he reached the top of the hill, St. Alban asked God to give him water and at once a perpetual spring bubbled up, confined within its channel and at his very feet, so that all could see that even the stream rendered service to the martyr. For it could not have happened that the martyr who had left no water remaining the river would have desired it on the top of the hill, if he had not realized that this was fitting. The river, when it had fulfilled its duty and completed its pious service, returned to its natural course, but it left behind a witness of its ministry. And so in this spot the valiant martyr was beheaded and received the crown of life which God has promised to those who love Him. But the man who set his unholy hands upon that pious neck was not allowed to rejoice over the death: for his eves fell to

the ground along with the head of the blessed martyr. Beheaded too at that time was the soldier who previously had been impelled by the will of Heaven to refuse to strike the holy confessor of God . . . Then the judge, daunted by such great and unprecedented heavenly miracles, soon ordered a halt to the persecution. He was beginning, in fact, to pay honour to the slaughter of saints, through which he previously believed he could force them to give up their allegiance to the Christian faith. The blessed Alban suffered on the 22nd of June near the city of Verulamium… Here when peaceful Christian times returned, a church of wonderful workmanship was built, a worthy memorial of his martyrdom. To this day sick people are healed at this place and the working of frequent miracles to bring it renown.

"About this time there also suffered **Aaron and Julius**, citizens of Caerleon, and many others, both men and women, in various places. They were racked by many kinds of torture and their limbs were indescribably mangled but, when their sufferings were over, their souls were carried to the joys of the Heavenly City."

The Turin MS of Constantius' *Life of St. Germanus* says that after St. Alban's death, "the evil Caesar, aghast at such wonders, ordered the persecutions to end, without the orders of the emperors, setting down in his report that the religion actually prospered from the slaughter of the saints..."

In the fifth century, Saints Germanus of Auxerre and Lupus of Troyes prayed at the shrine of St. Alban, and through the influence of St. Germanus several French churches and villages were named after him. Nine ancient English churches were dedicated to him.

One night towards the end of the eighth century, according to the St. Alban's tradition, an angel appeared to King Offa of Mercia and told him to raise the body of St. Alban, and place it in a suitably ornamented shrine. Offa then related this vision to his counsellors Humbert, archbishop of Lichfield, and Unwona, bishop of Leicester. The three of them then set off for Verulamium, the site of the saint's martyrdom, to recover his relics. As they approached the town, the king saw a bright light shining over the town, which was gladly received by them as a harbinger of success.

When the king, the clergy and the people were assembled, they embarked upon the search with prayer, fasting and alms, and struck the earth everywhere trying to find the place of burial. And the search had not continued for long when a light, like the star over the manger at Bethlehem, appeared and led them to the place. They began to dig, and in the presence of Offa the body of the saint was found. The body was then taken in solemn procession into the church, which had been erected on the spot where the saint was beheaded. It was deposited in shrine enriched with plates of gold and silver. Offa himself placed a circle of gold, inscribed with Alban's name and title, around the skull.

But before erecting a monastery on the site, the king decided to go to Rome to procure privileges for it. This was granted, at the price of the resumption of payment of "Peter's pence", a voluntary contribution from the English Church to the papacy which had been instituted by King Ina of Wessex for the maintenance of the Saxon college in Rome. On his return to England, King Offa convened a great assembly at St. Alban's, where it was resolved that the monastery should be large enough to keep one hundred monks, and well enough endowed to give hospitality to the many travellers who passed along Watling Street from London to the North. The monks were carefully selected from the leading monasteries of England; and the first stone was laid by Offa himself. He was still working on the construction of the monastery when death overtook him some four or five years later.

By tradition, the name of the priest whom St. Alban sheltered is known to have been **Amphibalus**. It is said that he fled to Wales with a thousand converts, who were all killed by the pagans. According to the eleventh-century *Martyrology of Jerome,* two of those killed were called **Socrates and Stephen**, and are commemorated on September 17. Amphibalus is said to have been taken back to St. Alban's where he was martyred.

As Robert Thornsberry writes, "the relics of holy Alban, Amphibalus, and perhaps the soldier as well, were preserved. A church, and later a cathedral, were built upon the site of the martyrdom and burial. During the invasions of the pagan Danes, they were removed for safekeeping. This later led to a shameful altercation between the monks of St. Albans and Ely that lasted for centuries. After the conquest [of 1066], the Normans, in order to impress the populace with their reverence for the island's saints, repaired and rebuilt the cathedral. Early in the fourteenth century, a new chapel and an elaborate shrine were constructed to house the relics. In the sixteenth century, the impious hands of the minions of Henry VIII destroyed the shrine during the dissolution of the monasteries. I do not know what became of the relics. Many years later, the shrine was laboriously pieced back together from the approximately two thousand fragments into which it had been smashed, and now stands in its former glory in the Anglican cathedral of St. Alban's."

A shoulder blade of the saint was kept at the church of St. Pantaleon in Cologne from the tenth century onwards. In 2002 it was returned to St. Albans and placed inside the 13th-century shrine structure.

Holy Martyr Alban, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Gildas, *On the Destruction of Britain*; Bede, *History of the English Church and People*, I, 7; A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*

relating to Great Britain and Ireland, vol. 1, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869, 1964, pp. 27-33; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 244, 390; Matthew of Paris, in *Old England: A Pictorial Museum of Regal, Ecclesiastical, Baronial, Municipal and Popular Antiquities,* 1845, reprinted by Arno Press, New York, 1978; Robert Edward Thornsberry, "Saint Alban, Protomartyr of Britain", *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. V, no. 3, May-June, 1983, pp. 5-7; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1978, pp. 8-9, 16, 227-228, 244, 390; Fr. Panagiotis Carras; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 124-126, 437-438; Fr. Nicholas Schofield, "The Forgotten Martyrs of Roman Britain", *Catholic Life*, June, 2007, pp. 46-48)

5. SAINT ALCMUND, MARTYR-KING OF NORTHUMBRIA

The holy Martyr Alcmund was the son of Alchred and the brother of Osred, kings of Northumbria. He succeeded to the throne of Northumbria after the murder of his brother, and ruled with great humility and love, being a liberal father to the poor, the orphans and the widows. But he always longed to die for Christ, and this the Lord in His goodness granted him…

In 802, Alderman Athelmund of the Hwicce (South-West Mercia) was enraged against the men of Wiltshire and threatened to invade that territory. On hearing this, King Alcmund, who had the intention of going to Wiltshire to protect some lands that he possessed there, called the two warring sides together and urged them to peace. The Mercians were persuaded to return home; but in their hearts they were not pacified, and they soon returned with a large army. At this juncture the men of Wiltshire called on Alcmund to help them. And he wishing to die for Christ, and remembering the words of the Lord: "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends", consented to their desire. In the ensuing battle, which took place in about 800, the Wiltshire men won, but both of the leaders and Alcmund were killed.

According to another account, however, St. Alcmund was killed by King Eardwulf of Northumbria, who had also killed his father.

The place where the holy king fell was the scene of many miracles. His body was transferred to the ancient church of Lilleshall, which had been built by St. Chad in 670, and then later to the White church in Derby. This was the scene of further miracles. The sick, the deaf, the blind and those suffering from various diseases were brought to the tomb, and there they received healing through the intercession of St. Alcmund. Some years later, when, at the request of many of the faithful, the priests of this church raised the holy relics, a most beautiful fragrance issued from the tomb. This fragrance persisted for a long time, as the people praised and glorified God and his holy martyr. However, when a certain unbeliever entered the church and started to behave in an impious manner, the fragrance suddenly ceased.

The body was moved temporarily to Shrewsbury Abbey, but returned to Derby in 1140. The church and shrine of St. Alcmund were concreted over in the 1960s to make way for a motorway. But his holy well can still be accessed.

St. Alcmund is commemorated on March 19.

Holy Martyr-King Alcmund, pray to God for us!

(Sources: P. Grosjean, "De Codice Hagiographico Gothano, Appendix: Vita S.

Aelkmundi Regis", *Analecta Bollandiana,* vol. LVIII, 1940, pp. 178-183; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford, 1978, p. 10; David Harrison, *England Before the Norman Conquest,* Ipswich, p. 257; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 261-262, 298-299)

6. SAINT ALDHELM, BISHOP OF SHERBORNE

Our holy Father Aldhelm was born in about 639. His father was called Kenter and was from the royal family of Wessex in Southern England. When he was still a boy, his father sent him to be trained in Greek and Latin letters at the monastery of St. Augustine in Canterbury. Some years later Aldhelm returned to his native Wessex and when he was about twenty-two received the monastic tonsure in the monastery of Malmesbury, which had been founded by the Irishman Maeldub in about 635. At one point he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Eleutherius of Wessex.

In 671, Aldhelm returned to Canterbury to study in the famous school of St. Adrian, who was described by Bede as "very learned in the Scriptures, experienced in ecclesiastical and monastic administration and a great scholar in Greek and Latin." Here, in addition to the Holy Scriptures, the ecclesiastical subjects and Greek, Latin and Hebrew, he studied Roman law, music, arithmetic and a hundred different kinds of poetic metre. Soon he acquired a high reputation as a writer of both prose and poetry. Bede praised his works, and two hundred years later King Alfred considered his poetry, which was still being sung, as "superior to all other English poetry". There is a story that he used to attract believers to his church in Frome by singing songs to a harp accompaniment on the bridge over which they passed. First he would sing popular ballads, and then, when he had caught the people's attention, he would introduce words of a more serious nature.

Aldhelm was forced to return home from Canterbury because of illness, and in 675, on the death of Maeldub, was elected abbot of Malmesbury. One of his first achievements was to replace the wooden church built by Maeldub by a splendid stone one dedicated to the Apostles Peter and Paul. We still possess the verses he composed to celebrate the consecration. He also built two more churches in Malmesbury dedicated to the Mother of God and the Archangel Michael. The latter was still standing in the twelfth century, and William of Malmesbury described it as excelling in size and beauty every other ancient church in England.

The Mercian and West Saxon kings and nobles gave many endowments to Aldhelm. This enabled him to build daughter monasteries and churches at Bradford-on-Avon (dedicated to St. Lawrence, which has survived almost intact to this day), Frome (to St. John the Baptist), Wareham (to St. Martin of Tours, which is still intact), Bruton (to St. Peter), Abingdon, Sherborne, Langton Matravers and Corfe. He also persuaded King Ina of Wessex to re-found the monastery at Glastonbury.

Aldhelm lived a life of great asceticism in his monastery, struggling in

prayer, fasting and reading. Like several of the British saints, he used to read the whole of the Psalter at night standing in a pool, which afterwards came to be called by his name. At the same time he continued his educational and literary activity, and we possess the treatise *On Virginity* which he presented to St. Hildelitha, abbess of Barking.

He was also renowned for the grace of wonderworking. Once, during the building of the church of St. Mary in Malmesbury, the workers noticed that one of the beams which had been transported a long distance for integration into the structure was too short. This was a blow, because it would have been a great labour and expense to bring another beam of the right size to the site. Nothing daunted, however, Aldhelm succeeded in lengthening the beam to the required size by his prayers alone. It is said that, during two fires that destroyed the whole monastery during the reigns of Kings Alfred and Edward, this beam suffered no damage, and finally perished through age and dry rot.

Aldhelm now decided to go to Rome to obtain privileges for his monasteries from the Pope. On the way, he stopped at his estate in Dorset and built a church in Wareham. William of Malmesbury relates of this church that in the twelfth century it was roofless, but that the shepherds of the district would crowd into it during storms because they believed that it never let the rain in. The spirit of Aldhelm watched over it, they claimed, and all attempts to re-roof it by nobles of the province failed. And even more miracles took place through his intercession at this church in Wareham than at his monastery in Malmesbury, where his relics lay.

Aldhelm arrived in Rome and was housed in the Lateran palace by Pope Sergius I. Every day he would celebrate the Divine Liturgy, and one day, having celebrated the Liturgy and being still with his thoughts caught up to heaven, he cast his chasuble behind him. The acolyte who was serving him was occupied in another part of the altar and did not catch it. But the chasuble remained miraculously suspended in thin air, hanging as it were on a sunbeam that was passing through the stained window. This chasuble was brought back to England and in the twelfth century still remained with no trace of corruption in the monastery of Malmesbury.

While Aldhelm was still in Rome, a boy was born in the house of the Pope's chamberlain. It was rumoured that the mother was a nun and was concealing the identity of the father. Soon the Pope was being accused of having fathered the child, and the scandal reached such proportions that it reached the ears of Emperor Justinian II in Constantinople and an ecclesiastical trial was initiated. But at this moment Aldhelm came to the defence of the Pope. "What would they say in Britain," he said, "or in some other country, if it was known that the Roman Pontiff was being thus assailed by his own citizens?" Then he ordered

the child to be brought so that he could dispel the slander from his own mouth. But the people derided him. How could a nine days' old child who had not yet been baptized tell the truth about his parentage? Nevertheless, by the power of God the child spoke up in a completely clear voice and declared that Pope Sergius was a virgin. The Pope was triumphantly vindicated, and Aldhelm praised. The saint was then asked whether he could reveal the identity of the true father. But he refused, saying that if he could he would rescue the innocent, but he would not condemn the guilty to death.

Then, by a bull dated about 701 that is still in existence, Pope Sergius granted Aldhelm's monasteries at Malmesbury and Frome exemption from episcopal jurisdiction. No priest, whatever his status, was allowed to celebrate the Liturgy in the monastic churches without the permission of the abbot, and when the abbot died the monks were to elect his successor. This charter was later confirmed by Kings Ina of Wessex and Ethelred of Mercia, both kings agreeing that in the event of war between their kingdoms the monasteries would be left in peace.

Aldhelm returned home loaded with holy relics and a wonderful altar made of finest white marble. It is said that a camel was carrying it as far as the Alps, but the animal slipped and was crushed by the altar, which itself broke into two pieces. The saint made the sign of the cross and lo! both the camel and the altar were immediately restored. On his return Aldhelm gave the altar to King Ina, who placed it in the church of St. Mary at Bruton. In the twelfth century the crooked flaw in the marble of the altar was still visible as a witness to the miracle.

A great crowd greeted the saint as he disembarked in England. There was general rejoicing that the light of Britain had returned. And on the repose of St. Hedda, bishop of Winchester, in 705, the diocese was divided into two and Aldhelm was elected bishop of the western half, with his see at Sherborne. The saint at first refused, saying that he was too old and wanted to end his days quietly at Malmesbury. But the council replied that with his age came greater maturity and freedom from vice.

So the saint finally yielded and went to Canterbury for his consecration at the hands of Archbishop Bertwald. While in the east of the country he made a trip to Dover, where ships came in from the continent laden with all kinds of merchandise. Finding a complete copy of the Old and New Testaments, he offered a price for it to the sailors. But they rejected his offer, jeered at him and set out to sea. But a storm immediately arose, they found themselves in danger, and stretched out their hands to the man of God on the shore. He prayed, and the storm immediately abated, the wind turned, and the sailors returned to shore. In gratitude they offered him the manuscripts free, but he insisted on

giving them a fair price. The manuscripts were still to be seen in Malmesbury in the twelfth century.

At about this time the Celtic Christians of Cornwall became subjects of King Ina of Wessex, who convened a Council to determine how best to unite the Saxon and British Churches, which were divided by a dispute over the true date of Pascha. Aldhelm was appointed to write a letter to King Geraint of Cornwall on the subject, which is still extant. He was successful, and the Celts of Cornwall adopted the Roman-Byzantine Paschalion.

However, the Celts of Wales proved more stubborn. They remained in schism, and were regarded as schismatics by the Anglo-Saxon and Irish Churches. As an Irish canon put it, "the Britons [of Wales] are… contrary to all men, separating themselves both from the Roman way of life and the unity of the Church".

St. Aldhelm described the behaviour of the schismatic Welsh thus: "Glorifying in the private purity of their own way of life, they detest our communion to such a great extent that they disdain equally to celebrate the Divine offices in church with us and to take course of food at table for the sake of charity. Rather,.. they order the vessels and flagons [i.e. those used in common with clergy of the Roman Church] to be purified and purged with grains of sandy gravel, or with the dusky cinders of ash.. Should any of us, I mean Catholics, go to them for the purpose of habitation, they do not deign to admit us to the company of their brotherhood until we have been compelled to spend the space of forty days in penance… As Christ truly said: 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish'."

In 768 Bishop Elbod of Bangor restored the northern Welsh to unity. The southern Welsh followed in 777.

Also at this time Aldhelm wrote a letter to the monks of St. Wilfrid, the exiled bishop of York and Hexham, exhorting them to remain faithful to their leader in his struggle for the sacred canons against the hierarchy of the Anglo-Saxon Church.

Aldhelm ruled his diocese for another four years. He preached day and night, travelling ceaselessly. At Sherborne he built a fine cathedral, and he continued to administer his monasteries at Malmesbury, Bradford-on-Avon and Frome.

Once while he was preaching in a village, he fixed his ashen staff into the ground. It grew miraculously and put forth boughs and leaves. The bishop was

concentrating on his sermon and did not notice the miracle. But when the people drew his attention to it, he gave glory to God and left an offering there. Later, many other ash trees sprang from this original, to the extent that the village was called Bishoptrees (now Stoke Orchard in Gloucestershire).

On May 26, 709, St. Aldhelm reposed in the wooden church of the village of Doulting, Somerset. Some years later, while a stone church was being consecrated on the spot, a blind widow pushed her way to the altar and was healed through the intercession of the saint, who had always been merciful to widows in his lifetime. Many more healings were done through washing in water that had touched the stone on which the saint had died.

At the moment that the saint reposed he appeared in a vision to his friend St. Egwin, bishop of Worcester, and commanded him to go at once to Doulting. Egwin immediately rode the eighty to a hundred miles to the body of the saint, and after celebrating a funeral Liturgy, arranged for the holy body to be transported to Malmesbury. At every seven miles of the fifty-mile journey, the procession stopped and crosses, later known as "bishopstones", were erected at Egwin's command. All of these crosses, including one in the monastery of Malmesbury, were still standing in good condition in the twelfth century, and miracles continued to be wrought through them for centuries. On reaching Malmesbury, St. Egwin buried the body of his friend in the church of St. Michael.

In 855 King Ethelwulf of Wessex, father of King Alfred the Great, translated the body of St. Aldhelm into a magnificent shrine adorned with silver and showing representations of the saint's miracles.

Another great benefactor of the church was King Athelstan, who had been delivered from danger at the battle of Brunanburgh in 937 through the prayers of St. Aldhelm. During that battle the Viking King Olaf, as William of Malmesbury writes, “coming well prepared by night, killed a certain bishop with all his household, who had reached the army in the evening and in ignorance of what had occurred had pitched his tent there on account of the evenness of the green plain. Then, proceeding further, Olaf came upon the king himself unprepared, for he had given himself up to profound sleep, not fearing at all that the enemy would dare such an attack. But when, roused from bed by so great an uproar, he urged his men to battle as much as he could through the darkness, by chance his sword fell from its sheath; wherefore, when all things were full of dread and blind confusion, he invoked God and St. Aldhelm, and replacing his hand on the scabbard, he found the sword, which today is kept in the kings’ treasury…”

On May 5, 986, St. Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury, transferred the saint's

relics for safety's sake into a stone tomb on the right of the altar. But during the reign of King Ethelred the pagan Danes broke into the monastery and came up to the shrine. One of them seized it and was about to cut out the precious stones on it when he was struck down as if stabbed. The rest fled in terror.

Once a very beautiful woman named Elfildis became the captive of a Norwegian count, who wanted to divorce his wife and marry her. In the end he raped her, but died soon after. Then the future Martyr-King Olaf of Norway, hearing of her beauty, made advances to her. But she rejected them. However, he, too, raped her, and as a result, in 1024, a son was born to her named Magnus. When St. Olaf was killed in 1030, Magnus was proclaimed king, but died only eighteen months later. Then the unfortunate Elfildis returned to England, promising God that if she returned safely she would never again eat meat. Some years later, however, she was at a banquet and was persuaded to break her vow. As a result she was struck with paralysis. For three years she visited the shrines of the saints seeking healing. At length, coming to St. Aldhelm's shrine on his feastday, she was restored to full health. She then became a nun and was buried at Malmesbury.

St. Aldhelm's resting place attracted pious Christians even from the East. Thus early in the eleventh century a monk named Constantine came to Malmesbury from Greece - it was not known why he had left his homeland. He planted the first vineyard in the monastery, which survived for many years. He was of a very mild disposition and very abstinent habits. When he was on the point of death, he drew an archbishop's pallium out of the knapsack that he always carried with him, put it on, and immediately died. He was buried in the church of St. Andrew. But after some years some building works in the monastery necessitated the exhumation of his body. The bones were found to be of exceptional whiteness and exuded a beautiful fragrance.

Once a dangerous demoniac was bound with cords and carried to Malmesbury on the eve of the feast of the Ascension. The monks advised those who were carrying him to pray to St. Aldhelm on his behalf. He was laid before the altar, and after calming down and falling into a light sleep he rose completely healed.

Again, a cripple seeking a cure stopped at Malmesbury on his way to Christchurch in Hampshire. Immediately he entered the church he felt a kind of current passing through all his members. After falling asleep in front of the altar, he was woken up by the chanting of the monks coming into the church, and leapt up cured.

Once, after the Norman-papist conquest of England, a fisherman from the Isle of Wight was struck blind while fishing at sea. His boat was brought to land

by his companions, who advised him to seek the help of God. They then rowed him to Christchurch, Hampshire, where he remained for three years. Then he was told in a dream to go to Malmesbury, where he recovered his sight.

This miracle convinced the Normans, who were in general sceptical about the holiness of the Saxon saints and whose first archbishop, Lanfranc, had discontinued the cult of Aldhelm, that Aldhelm was indeed a saint. Osmund, bishop of Salisbury authorized the resumption of the cult and the translation of his relics. Then Abbot Warin brought out the relics, which had been hidden for fear of the Danes, and after a three day fast the bishop translated them into the shrine on October 3, 1078.

Many more miracles continued to be performed at the shrine of St. Aldhelm. They were related in detail by William of Malmesbury in 1125.

St. Aldhelm is commemorated on May 25.

Holy Father Aldhelm, pray to God for us!

(Sources: William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, I, 14, book V; *Gesta Regum Anglorum,* 134; The Venerable Bede, *History of the English Church and People*; A.W. Haddan & W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1869, 1964, volume I, pp. 122, 202-203; *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, translated by Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, Ipswich: Brewer, 1979, p. 158; Margaret Gallyon, *The Early Church in Wessex and Mercia*, Lavenham: Suffolk, 1980; S. Baring-Gould, *The Lives of the Saints*, vol. 5, London: John Nimmo, 1987; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 10-11; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 217-218, 238-240, 250-252)

7. SAINT ALFRED, MARTYR-PRINCE OF ENGLAND

The ancient town of Guildford is dominated by two hills, between which flows the River Wey. On top of one hill there stands the church of St. Martha. It is likely that the word "Martha" was originally "Martyr", for the parish and the church are called "Marterhill" in many early documents. Moreover, in a document dated 1463 it is called "the chapel of St. Martha the Virgin and all the holy Martyrs commonly called Marterhill near the town of Guldeforde". According to a well-established tradition, these martyrs were burned to death on the hill in Saxon times, perhaps around 600 A.D. during a pagan reaction against the missionary activities of St. Augustine, first archbishop of Canterbury.

On the other hill, known as Guildown, another martyrdom took place over 400 years later. The story is as follows.

The holy Martyr-Prince Alfred was the son of King Aethelred "the Unready" of England, and brother of the future king and saint, Edward the Confessor. With his brother, he spent many years in exile, following the expulsion of the English royal family to Normandy in 1016 by the Danish King Canute. On the death of Canute, however, in 1035, the princes' mother, Queen Emma, judged that the political situation had changed in England, and invited her sons to join her at Winchester. Edward came first, but was forced to return to Normandy after a battle in the Southampton area. Then came Alfred, the younger prince.

Having selected some companions with his brother's approval, he went first to Flanders, where he stayed with Marquis Baldwin. Then he set out from Boulogne and crossed the English Channel. On approaching the shore, however, he was recognized by the enemy, and was forced to land at another port further down the coast. Finding no opposition there, he set off inland.

As Alfred and his men approached the town of Guildford, thirty miles south-west of London, they were met by the powerful Earl Godwin of Wessex, who professed loyalty to the young prince and procured lodgings for him and his men in the town. The next morning, Godwin said to Alfred:

"I will safely and securely conduct you to London, where the great men of the kingdom are awaiting your coming, that they may raise you to the throne."

This he said in spite of the fact that the throne was already occupied by the son of Canute, Harold "Harefoot". Events were to show that Godwin was not sincere. He was actually in league with King Harold to lure the young prince to his death... He himself declared that it had not been by either his counsel “or desire that the king’s brother had been deprived of his eyes, but that he had only obeyed the commands of King Harold his master”…

Then the earl led the prince and his men over the hill of Guildown, which is to the west of Guildford, on the road to Winchester, not London. Perhaps the prince had insisted on continuing his journey to his original destination, his mother's court in Winchester... In any case, Godwin repeated his tempting offer; showing the prince the magnificent panorama from the hill both to the north and to the south, he said:

"Look around on the right hand and on the left, and behold what a realm will be subject to your dominion."

Alfred then gave thanks to God and promised that if he should ever be crowned king, he would institute such laws as would be pleasing and acceptable to God and men. At that moment, however, he was seized and bound together with all his men. Nine tenths of them were then murdered. And since the remaining tenth was still so numerous, they, too, were decimated.

Alfred was slung naked to a horse and then conveyed by boat to the monastery of Ely. As the boat reached land, his eyes were put out. For a while he was looked after by the monks, who were fond of him, but soon after he died, probably on February 5, 1036, and was honourably buried by the monks in the southern porch at the western end of the church. There wondrously beautiful visions of light were often reported, and many miracles were performed. He was the object of local veneration; and "justly so," says the *Encomium Emma Reginae*, "for he was martyred in his innocence".

Although Godwin denied any complicity in the murder (according to the *Encomium,* Harold's men took the captive, including Alfred, out of Godwin's hands), both popular opinion and that of King Edward, the prince's brother, pointed the finger at him. On the Monday after Pascha, 1053, the earl was feasting with the king when a waiter in his haste struck one foot against some obstacle and nearly fell. But, advancing his other foot, he recovered his balance. Many of those present joked, saying how right it was that one foot should help another. And the earl cried out:

"So should one brother help another, and a man may support his friend in time of need."

At which the king, turning towards him, immediately replied:

"So should my brother have helped me if Godwin had allowed it."

At this Godwin turned pale, and with a distorted countenance exclaimed:

"Well do I know, O king, that in your mind you hold me guilty of your brother's death. Well do I know, alas, that you do not disbelieve those who say that I was a traitor to him and to you. But let God Who knows all secrets be my judge! May this crust of bread which I hold in my hand pass through my throat and leave me

unharmed to show that I was innocent of your brother's death!"

He spoke; and putting the crust into his mouth he thrust it into the midst of his gullet. Then he tried to push it further but was unable. Then he tried to pull it out but it stuck ever more firmly. He choked; his eyes turned up; and his limbs grew rigid. The king watched his wretched death, and then said to those standing by:

"Drag out that dog."

In the 1920s, archaeological excavations on Guildown, Guildford, discovered the bones of about two hundred men, their skulls being of the round-headed, Norman type, in a shallow grave dating back to about 1040. It appears that they had been stripped and their hands tied behind their backs before being killed and thrust into the grave. An Orthodox church dedicated to the holy Archangel Michael now stands about one hundred metres from this grave.

Holy Martyr-Prince Alfred, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Andrew Holden, *The Story of the Church of Saint Martha on the Hill near Guildford*, second edition, 1967; *Encomium Emma Reginae*; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*; Anonymous, *Vita Aedwardi Regis*; *Liber Eliensis*, II, 90; Geoffrey Gaimar, *L'Estoire des Engleis*, p. 788; William of Poitiers and John of Brompton, in E.W. Brayley, *A Topographical History of Surrey*, vol. I, London: Willis, 1850, pp. 287-88; Ailred of Rievaulx, in D.C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror*, London: Eyre Methuen, 1969, pp. 412-13; A.W.G. Lowther, "The Saxon Cemetery at Guildown, Guildford, Surrey", *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, vol. XXXIX, 1929-30; Letter of the Dean of Ely, the Very Revd. M.S. Carey, January 6, 1978; Peter Rex, *Edward the Confessor King of England,* Stroud: Amberley, 2013, pp. 28-32, *The Last English King. The Life of Harold II,* Stroud: The History Press, 2008, p. 27)

8. SAINT ALPHEGE, HIEROMARTYR ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

St. Alphege (Aelfheah) was born in 954 of pious parents, who soon handed him over to be instructed in literature and the Christian Faith. Seeking a more total commitment, however, the saint abandoned his paternal inheritance and, ignoring his mother's tears, entered the monastery of Deerhurst in Gloucestershire, whose ancient church survives to the present day. There, while still an adolescent, he excelled in prayer, vigil, fasting and charity.

Some years later, he went to Bath and built for himself a small cell in which he lived the life of a hermit with the strictest asceticism. Soon certain nobles started coming to him for confession and spiritual advice. As his fame increased, donations poured in - which he immediately gave to the poor.

Others left the world and sought to live the monastic life under his direction; and so St. Dunstan appointed him abbot of a small monastery, although he had no desire for such a position.

On becoming abbot, however, he did not slacken his ascetic way of life, and continued to live in his little cell. He appointed a suitable overseer to supply the material needs of the monastery, but decided all important matters himself.

The saint warned his monks that their condemnation would be the greater if, while professing to be monks and wearing the monastic habit, they continued to live like men of the world. But this did not prevent them from indulging in secret nocturnal feasts and orgies. One night, however, the leader of the revels was suddenly struck dead in the middle of a feast. The saint was, as usual, offering up tearful prayers to God when he heard loud voices coming from the monastery. Thinking that thieves had broken in, or that the brethren were being disturbed by some demonic ruse, he came closer. Then he saw two terrible and foul-looking men beating the man who had just died with whips and flaming serpents. To his pathetic pleas for mercy they replied:

"You did not obey God, so neither shall we obey you."

After repeating this several times, they dragged their captive away.

In 984, the bishop of Winchester, St. Ethelwold, reposed in peace. Immediately a dissension arose as to who should succeed him. St. Dunstan, the archbishop of Canterbury, was praying about this when the holy Apostle Andrew appeared to him and said:

"Why are you sad, beloved? Why do you tearfully pour out such mournful complaints? Rise, and place your hand on Abbot Alphege; and when you have anointed him with holy oil make him the bishop of the widowed Church. And do not allow any power to stop you; for this decision has issued, not from a man, but from the mouth of Almighty God. And lest I should leave you in any doubt as to the identity of the man speaking with you, I am Andrew, the apostle of the Son of God and the most loving guardian of your salvation."

Dunstan joyfully told this vision to King Ethelred, and when a council had been convened everyone cried out that they wishes what God wishes and what God's archbishop should decide. Then two bishops, one on either side, led the bishop-elect into the church to the acclaim of the people.

"Many years!" they cried.

And then he was consecrated. This took place on October 19. Immediately after the consecration, the saint set out to visit his new see. The citizens came out to meet him, chanting:

"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

He was enthroned in St. Ethelwold's cathedral in Winchester on October 28.

At Winchester, as at Deerhurst and Bath, St. Alphege was distinguished by his charity to others and severity to himself. At night he would go out to pray, barefoot and thinly clad even in the coldest weather. And his body was so emaciated by fasting that, as many people noticed, his hands when uplifted seemed almost transparent. At the same time, he attended so carefully to the needs of the poor that it was said that there were no beggars in Winchester during his episcopate. And many were the miracles wrought through his intercession.

Among his good works was his confirmation (the western equivalent of chrismation) of the Norwegian King Olaf Trygvasson, who had been ravaging the countryside. After being confirmed, King Olaf promised the bishop never to return to England with warlike intent. He then returned to his native land and converted them to the Christian Faith with the aid of English bishops and priests.

On hearing the fame of Alphege's holy preaching and life, St. Dunstan rejoiced and prayed to God that this man, young as he was (only thirty at the time of his consecration) would succeed him in the primatial see of Canterbury. And his prayer was granted, though not immediately but only eighteen years after his own death in 988. For in 1005, on the death of Archbishop Aelfric, St. Alphege was translated from Winchester to Canterbury at the age of fifty-two.

A few days later, the saint set out for Rome to receive the archbishop's pallium from the Pope. He entered a town just inside Italy and rested for a while. But the citizens, noticing that they had a stranger in their midst, broke into his house and stole all his goods, driving him out with blows and insults. With admirable equanimity, the saint set out on his return journey. He had not gone far when the town's ramparts suddenly caught fire, showering burning ashes on the neighbouring houses and threatening the citizens with destruction. They rushed out into the streets and watched helplessly as the flames rose higher and spread further. Then, coming to their senses, they realized that the fire was God's vengeance on them for their maltreatment of the holy man. They rushed after him and tearfully begged him to return.

"Let us return," he said, "that we may see the fire from closer quarters."

When he saw the fire, his eyes filled with tears and he prayed to God. Suddenly the flames were suspended in mid-air, and the fire which had spread through many houses was found outside the town walls. Recognizing the author of the miracle, the townspeople flowed out to him like a stream with gifts in their hands. But Alphege replied:

"Keep what is yours; I am satisfied with my own things. Only do not cast out strangers from your homes. Receive all who come to you and look after them. God dwells in good men, and therefore it is good for one person to receive another in whom God dwells. But if your estimate turns out to be mistaken, and the man whom you considered to be religious is found to be the opposite, you will not lose your reward. For God honours the good intention."

Finally, the saint arrived in Rome and sought an audience with the Pope. They spoke together, and the Pope came to love him so much that he honoured him publicly in the presence of the Roman Senate. One day, the saint was saddened in countenance. Surprised at this, his companions came to him, one after the other, seeking the reason for his grief. "No-one," he said, "will see me happy today; for he who succeeded me at Winchester has died."

This was difficult to believe, since no-one had come with news from England. But on the other hand, it was easy to believe; for the saint had never been known to lie. The Pope and the Archbishop said goodbye to each other and parted, both joyful and sad. And when Alphege had already crossed the Alps, a group of English nobility on the way to Rome came up to him and, in answer to his inquiry, said that the bishop of Winchester had died on the very day (his companions noted) on which the saint had been so sad. The news of this further demonstration of the saint's supernatural gifts spread throughout England.

The nation's morale was at a very low ebb when the saint returned. The Danes

were ravaging the land with fire and sword, and the tribute offered them by the king only seemed to increase their greed. Desertions from the army were commonplace; and sometimes even noblemen with their ships joined the other side. The king with his councillors, including St. Alphege, passed laws strengthening ecclesiastical discipline and penalizing traitors, with the death penalty ordained for those who should plot against the king's life. And in 1008 the archbishop and his synod proclaimed the day of the martyrdom of King Edward, the king's half-brother, a national feastday - another clear warning to potential traitors and king-killers.

However, the sad story continued, with indecision, incompetence and treachery the order of the day. Thus "when the enemy was in the east," bemoaned The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, "then our levies were mustered in the west; and when they were in the south, then our levies were in the north. Then all the councillors were summoned to the king, for a plan for the defence of the realm had to be devised then and there. But whatever course of action was decided upon it was not followed for a single month. In the end there was no leader who was willing to raise levies, but each fled as quickly as he could; nor even in the end would one shire help another."

The upshot of all this was that in 1013 King Ethelred was forced to go into exile through the treachery of his subjects. Even worse, perhaps, than this was the treachery which led to the death of St. Alphege the year before. The story was as follows.

In the autumn of 1011 the Danes besieged Canterbury and sacked it. They were helped, on the one hand, by Abbot Elfmar of Canterbury, who, though he owed his life to St. Alphege, now turned against him and his fellow citizens; and, on the other, by Alderman Edric Streona of Mercia. Edric had come to be involved in the sack of Canterbury through his brother, a proud and cruel man who slandered the nobility of Canterbury in the king's presence and then violently burned their inheritance. But they rose up and killed him, burning down his house. Edric demanded vengeance from the king for his brother's death; but the king refused, saying that his brother had been justly punished. Then Edric, determined to avenge his brother, collected an army of ten thousand well-armed men. Realizing, however, that these forces were insufficient, he came to an agreement with the Danes whereby, in exchange for their help, they would retain the north of England in the case of victory while he held the south.

Meanwhile, St. Alphege had been preaching, redeeming captives, feeding the hungry and even converting many of the invaders. This was another reason why the Danes were eager to unite with Edric against the men of Canterbury. And as they approached the city from Sandwich, the people fled to the cathedral, convinced that they were safe there.

The nobility, meanwhile, urged St. Alphege to flee. But he refused, saying that he had no intention of being a hireling. Then he gathered the people together and exhorted them to have courage and patience, setting before them the triumphs of the martyrs. Finally, having blessed them and communicated them in the Holy Mysteries, he dismissed them in peace, commending them all to the protection of God.

The enemy came and laid siege to the city. On the twentieth day, the saint sent to the Danes, exhorting them to desist from their purpose and warning them that when a father wishes to beat his sons, he afterwards throws the stick into the fire. In a similar way God would punish the Danes even after using them to chastize the English.

But the English traitors under Edric were only the more incited to cruelty by the sight of their fellow countrymen's distress. They set fire to the houses, and soon, fanned by a strong south wind, the fire spread everywhere. Torn between whether to stay on the ramparts and defend the city, or rush down to their houses, the citizens finally chose the latter course. And soon they were dragging beloved wives and children out of the burning houses - only to see them immediately cut down by the swords of the enemy. For now that the ramparts were unguarded they were able (with Abbot Elfmar's help) to enter unhindered, with such a terrible clamour of trumpets and voices that it seemed as if the city were being shaken to its foundations.

"No-one who was not a spectator of that calamity," writes the saint's biographer, Osbern of Canterbury, "would know how to describe the reality of it, and the wretchedness of its confusion of evils. Some had their throats cut, others perished in the flames, still more were thrown over the walls. Others, shameful to relate, were hung up by their private parts and expired thus. Ladies more distinguished than others by their nobility were dragged through the streets of the city because they could not produce treasures which they did not possess. Finally they were thrown into the flames and died. The cruelty was especially savage against those under age; while babes were ripped out of their mother's womb or pierced through with spears or crushed to pieces under waggon wheels...

"The venerable prelate, unable to bear so many deaths among his spiritual children, suddenly, while he was surrounded by a crowd of weeping monks in the church of the Saviour, slipped out of the hands of those restraining him, rushed to a place full of corpses, hurled himself amidst a dense mass of the enemy and with groans cried out:

"'Have pity, have pity! And if you recognize yourselves to be men, put an end

to your persecution of the innocent! Instead of these, take me, who, to increase the Christian people, despoiled you of many a soldier, and who, with unrestrained lips, always condemned the crimes of your impiety!'"

Innumerable hands seized him, stopped his mouth, bound his hands, scratched his face with their nails, punched and kicked him in the sides. The man of God uttered not a sound, but his lips moved as if he were speaking to God. Then he was forced to witness death after death in front of his very eyes so that he might suffer every torment, whether in his own person or in the persons of those whom he mourned.

Then the Danes came to the cathedral church of the Saviour. They set fire to it, and soon molten lead from the roof was seeping into the building. Covering their heads with their palls, the weeping monks ran out of all the doors of the building, only to be cut down by the swords of the soldiers waiting outside.

Out of the eight thousand inhabitants of Canterbury, only four monks and some eight hundred others survived the sack. The survivors, after suffering blows and wounds, were either judged worthy of being ransomed - these included Bishop Godwin of Rochester, Abbess Leofrun of St. Mildred's and all the clergy except Abbot Elfmar of St. Augustine's monastery (not the traitor) - or were sold into slavery.

The archbishop had seen his people slaughtered, the city burned down and the cathedral church of Christ the Saviour profaned and devastated. Now he was bound and dragged through the north gate of the city. There lay the survivors with stocks on their feet and under military guard. On seeing him, they all groaned and wept and raised their hands to heaven in prayer. But then, as the saint stood strengthening their shattered souls in prayer, he was given a ferocious blow between the shoulders, so that his shoulder was cut open and blood poured over his whole body. Even the Danes were horrified.

Then he was led from the city to the ships, from the ships to the prison, from the prison to the judge, and finally back to the prison, which was dark, narrow and full of frogs. There he remained under a guard of twelve soldiers for another seven months. The Danes offered him freedom in exchange for money from the Church's patrimony; but he refused.

And so, as Pascha of the year 1012 approached, the saint was still in prison, celebrating the Passion of Christ as he was able, in humility and contrition of heart.

"Then was he a captive," wrote the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, "who had been the head of England and of Christendom. There could misery be seen where often bliss was seen before, in that unhappy city, whence Christianity came first to us, and

both spiritual and earthly bliss..."

Meanwhile, the wrath of God was falling upon the Danes. Two thousand of their soldiers fell ill of a terrible internal malady and died shortly after; while many others, similarly struck, awaited death. The Christians advised them to recognize their crime against Christ, to confess, weep and make amends to the archbishop. But they did not accept this advice, attributing their misfortunes to the instability of Chance rather than the will of God. But death reigned over all those who had planned to kill the archbishop: great numbers of them were attacked, tormented and wasted away by a terrible pain in the bowels. Meanwhile, a great fear of death overcame the living. Finally they ran to the captive saint, bewailed their sins with tears, and besought him to pray to God on their behalf.

It was Holy Thursday, the day on which the Lord gave His Most Pure Body and Blood to His disciples. St. Alphege was brought out of prison and honourably seated in the magistrate's chair. He told the Danes that their terrible cruelty did not merit them a pardon, but that he was determined to imitate the example of his Lord, Who gave holy bread even to the man who betrayed Him and forgave those who crucified Him.

"Therefore," he said, "forgetting the burning of the city, the injuries which have been inflicted upon myself, your past impiety, and the slaughter of the innocents, I shall intercede for my torturers as He interceded with the Father for those who crucified Him. So take this bread - it will immediately heal you. Only, when you have eaten and obtained health in accordance with your desire, give solemn thanks to the Saviour, or you will remain more guilty of blasphemy."

Then he blessed bread and gave to them. They were all healed. From Holy Thursday to Holy Saturday no-one died.

Seeing this, the leaders of the Danes sent four of their military commanders to the saint. They thanked him, but then said that they would give him life and liberty in exchange for a ransom of sixty talents of silver weighing fifty pounds, together with his services in persuading the king to pay another two hundred talents as the price of a truce between the two nations.

The saint refused, saying that the embassy was illegal and their demands impossible. They were mistaken if they thought he would rob the Church or betray the honour of his king and country to satisfy their avarice.

"It is not done for a Christian to hand over Christian flesh to be devoured by pagan teeth."

The Danes came to him a second time, asking him - in a gentler manner this time

- to affix his seal to an order authorizing the despoliation of the estates of the Church, in exchange for which he would be redeemed. Again the saint refused, citing the example of the holy Martyr Laurence of Rome, who, on being entrusted with the treasures of the Church, gave them away to the poor lest they should fall into the hands of the persecutors.

"If St. Laurence gave what was not theirs to the poor, how can I take what is theirs from the poor?

Then they raged terribly, gnashing on him with their teeth, and decided to carry out the sentence that had been passed on him. New tortures were applied; but he remained immovable. Then, in the night of Friday of Bright Week, the devil devised a different and subtler means of breaking the saint's resistance. Having caused the guards to fall into a light sleep, he appeared to him in the form of an angel of light, declaring that for the sake of the common good he was going to lead the saint out of the squalor of the prison.

"Fear not the stigma of cowardice," he said; "you are not more sublime than Peter, nor stronger than Paul. The one was delivered from prison by an angel, and the other was let down in a basket. Christ Himself slipped out of the hands of those who were going to stone Him, and commanded His disciples to flee in time of persecution."

Deceived by these words, the saint followed the deceiver out of the prison. But when they had crossed several water-logged fields in the thick darkness, the devil suddenly disappeared. Realizing his error, the saint groaned and threw himself down in the middle of the marshes, crying with tears to the Lord: "O Giver of life, O only Guide of the race of Adam, why hast Thou deprived me of Thy grace in my old age when Thou never didst leave me in the prime of life? Thou hast mercifully preserved me for so long, and dost Thou now cast me away in the extremity of life? O Thou Who art all I desire, all that I long to enjoy, what use is it to have triumphed in battle throughout the long day, but at the end of it to be conquered and deprived of the fruits of victory? Or what praise is it to have embarked on the voyage and escaped shipwreck in the middle of the sea, only to suffer the shipwreck of unexpected death on the shore? How many times have I found Thee to be my Saviour in the shipwrecks of life! Now, I beseech Thee, send me consolation in this snare of the devil, a helper in troubles and tribulations."

"At evening shall weeping find lodging, but in the morning rejoicing" (Psalm 29.5). And "the angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him, and will deliver them" (Psalm 33.7). Thus it was for the man of God. For as dawn arose, a young man adorned in golden splendour stood before him, and asked him where he was fleeing to. The bishop replied that he was not fleeing, but had obeyed the voice of a Divine command.

"That was no Divine command," said the angel, "but a device of the devil. He did not wish so much to lead you out of prison as to seduce you once outside. Return, therefore, to your place, where a crown is laid up for you in heaven. Tomorrow the Father will honour you, and you will be eternally in the greatest honour in the heavens with His Son."

The saint therefore returned to the place of contest and joyfully awaited the hour in which he would receive his crown from God.

The hour drew near, and a crowd of turbulent men burst into the prison, seized him, showered him with many blows, breaking his skull, and finally thrust him into the place where all the refuse was thrown out and burned.

Most of the night had passed and on the Saturday after Pascha, April 19, 1012, was beginning to dawn. Suddenly St. Dunstan appeared to the man of God, his face and vestments shining gloriously, amidst sweet-smelling fragrance and the mellifluous chants of the saints. Stretching out his hands to St. Alphege, he announced to him his forthcoming death and the reward of eternal life laid up for him. Then his bonds were loosed, his wounds closed and his whole body was restored to perfect health.

On seeing these things, the guards were terrified. They told their fellows, who came rushing up to see the manifestation of God's grace. Then the leaders of the Danish army, seeing their men deserting in droves to the man of God, hastily passed the sentence of death upon him, lest they should lose more through him than through a multitude of external enemies. The saint was bound and led to the place of judgement under a large armed guard. A great crowd of the faithful followed him, weeping and mourning. But he besought them not to hinder his struggle against the prince of this world, but to help him by their prayers.

He was only an arrow's flight away when a vast murmur went through the whole council:

"Give us gold, bishop, or today you will be a spectacle to the world."

The bishop was silent for a while from exhaustion, and stood still, supported reverently by the hands of his own people. Then, having recovered his breath, he replied:

“I offer you the gold of Divine wisdom. Abandon the vanity which you love, and devote your zeal to the one living, true and eternal God. But if you obstinately despise the counsel of God which is announced to you through me, you will suffer a worse fate than the death of Sodom."

At that, the mob, unable to withstand the force of his words and foaming with rage, jumped up from their seats. However, Thurkill, one of the Danish leaders, on seeing the wicked men gathering their weapons to kill the saint, ran quickly and said:

"Do not do this, I beg you. I will give to all of you with a willing heart gold and silver and all that I have here or can get by any means, except only my ship, on condition that you do not sin against the Lord's Anointed."

Later, Thurkill, who had interceded for St. Alphege, together with forty-five of his ships transferred his allegiance from the Danes to the English and became a Christian. But the unbridled anger of his comrades, harder than iron or stone, was not softened by such gentle words. They knocked the saint down with the backs of their battle-axes, and then stoned him with the heads of oxen and showers of stones and blocks of woods. But he, bending his right knee on the earth, prayed thus:

"O Lord Jesus, Only-begotten Son of the Most High Father, Who camest into the world through the womb of an incorrupt Virgin to save sinners, receive me in peace and have mercy on these men."

Then, falling to the earth and rising again, he said:

"O Good Shepherd, O only Shepherd, look with compassion on the sons of the Church, whom I, dying, commend to Thee."

Then a man named Thrum, whom the saint himself had received from the font of Holy Baptism, seeing him in agony and on the edge of death, took his axe and clove his head through, thereby releasing his soul to eternal glory.

Immediately one of the Danish leaders was crippled in his limbs, and realized that he had sinned against Christ's elect, as it is written: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12.19).

St. Alphege was martyred at Greenwich, to the east of London, on the south bank of the river Thames. And the leaders of the Danes now threw his body into the river. But then a crowd of people who had been taught by him took arms, determined to die rather than to allow the body through which they had received the mystery of Holy Baptism to be submerged in water. And so they guarded it, allowing it neither to be submerged nor to be buried. Then representatives of both parties met to resolve the dispute, and an agreement was reached. The Danes said:

"Look at this branch cut off from an ash-tree with neither sap nor bark. If we smear this with his blood and find it flowering in the morning, then we shall agree

that we have killed a holy and righteous man, and you can bury him with honour. But if the wood remains dry, then we shall say that you have erred in your love for him and the decision about what to do with the body will be ours."

The next morning the dry wood was putting forth leaves. Seeing this, the Danes rushed to the holy body, embraced it with tears and groans, and then, taking it upon their shoulders, brought it to the tree in triumph. Here innumerable miracles took place: the sick were healed, the blind were given their sight, the deaf their hearing, the dumb their tongues. Then at the place of martyrdom a church was built (its Anglican successor still stands), and a multitude of leading Danes were baptized and received into the bosom of the Holy Church. Finally, Bishops Ednoth and Alfhun and the citizens of London received his holy body, and brought it to London with all reverence, and buried it in St. Paul's church, where miracles continued to the martyr's glory.

On June 8, 1023, St. Alphege's incorrupt body was placed in a new coffin and then taken in procession to an adorned royal barge, in which the Danish King Canute, Archbishop Ethelnoth of Canterbury and other bishops and earls, escorted it across the Thames first to Southwark and then to Rochester. Here the procession was joined by Queen Emma and her son, and "with much state and rejoicing and hymns of praise" the relics were conveyed to Canterbury. On June 15, the relics were enshrined by the bishops and clergy."

Soon both dates - that of his martyrdom, and that of his translation - were entered into the calendar of the English Church. But soon after the Norman Conquest, his sanctity and status as a martyr was questioned by the first papist archbishop of Canterbury, Lanfranc. However, he consulted Anselm, his successor, about this, and Anselm replied that Alphege was a martyr for justice as St. John the Baptist had been a martyr for truth.

No truly Christian hierarch would have questioned Alphege's sanctity. In any case, any residual doubts were removed by the discovery, in 1105, that his body was still incorrupt. For St. Alphege, ascetic, hierarch, patriot and martyr, deserved the highest accolade: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15.13).

St. Alphege is commemorated on April 19 and June 8.

Holy Hieromartyr Alphege, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Osbern of Canterbury, *Vita S. Elphegi*, in H. Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, 1691, II, pp. 122-147; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, E, 1009, 1010, 1011, 1012; Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicle*; Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition*, The English Orthodox Trust, 1995, chapter 78; David Farmer, *The Oxford*

Dictionary of Saints, Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 13-14; Harriet O'Brien, *Queen Emma and the Vikings,* London: Bloomsbury, 2006, pp. 128-133; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 60, 224)

9. SAINT AUGULUS, HIEROMARTYR BISHOP OF AUGUSTA

And those with him

In the early martyrologies of St. Jerome and St. Bede we find the names of a Bishop Augulus, who suffered "in Britain [Brittaniis] in the city of Augusta", a name sometimes given to London, together with **Anatolius, Andrew, Ammon, Nepotian, Saturninus, Lucius and Saturna,** without any further details apart from the date of commemoration (February 7).

Holy Hieromartyr Augulus and those with you, pray to God for us!

(Sources: A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland, vol. 1, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869, 1964, pp. 27-33; David Farmer, The Oxford Dictionary of Saints, Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 244, 390; Fr. Nicholas Schofield, "The Forgotten Martyrs of Roman Britain", Catholic Life, June, 2007, pp. 46-48)

10. SAINTS AUGUSTINE, LAURENCE, MELLITUS, JUSTUS, HONORIUS AND DEUSDEDIT, ARCHBISHOPS OF CANTERBURY

Our holy Father Augustine, who with his spiritual father Pope Gregory the Great, is accorded the title of the Apostle of the English, was prior of the monastery of St. Andrew in Rome. According to one source, he may have come from Sicily. In the summer of the year 596 he was sent by St. Gregory at the head of a party of forty monks from the same monastery to England, to convert the pagan Anglo-Saxons. This had always been a cherished dream of St. Gregory, who had himself set out for England once but had been forced to return to Rome because of his election to the Papacy.

Having arrived in Aix-en-Provence, Augustine and his monks heard discouraging reports of the difficulty of the journey to England and the savagery of the islanders. Augustine was then sent back to Rome to entreat St. Gregory to abandon the project, while his monks remained at the famous monastery of Lérins. However, Gregory raised Augustine to the rank of abbot and sent him back with strict orders to proceed to England; so the monks continued on their journey north.

At the town of Cé, some women created a riot against the monks; but when a supernatural light illumined the ground where the monks slept, the townsfolk changed their minds and said that they were gods.

St. Augustine and his companions alighted in England at Ebbsfleet, Kent; the stone which first received the imprint of their feet was preserved in St. Augustine's monastery for centuries. Two monks then went with their Frankish interpreters to King Ethelbert at Canterbury. The king, who had heard about the Christian Faith from his Christian wife Bertha, gave the messengers a favourable hearing and ordered that St. Augustine's party be honourably treated.

A few days later, the king went to see the missionaries at Richborough. The meeting took place in the open air because the king feared the influence of magicians inside. The monks came to meet the king in a procession, chanting psalms and hymns and preceded by a silver cross and an icon of the Saviour. Ethelbert was not at first inclined to accept Augustine's preaching, but he did not prevent him from preaching to others. Moreover, he provided the missionaries with a house in Canterbury and food at his own expense; and they were allowed to worship in the old Romano-British church of St. Martin. Soon the holy life of the Roman monks began to bear fruit. And the many miracles they performed brought the king, too, to repentance and Holy Baptism, which took place on the Feast of Pentecost, June 2, 597.

Five months later, on November 16, 597, Augustine was consecrated to the

episcopate in France by Archbishop Virgilius of Arles and other French bishops with the blessing of Pope Gregory, although another source indicates that he was probably consecrated by bishops in the ecclesiastical provinces of Trier and Rheims. Then he returned to Canterbury, where he was received with great joy by the king, who promptly gave him his palace as a monastery and archiepiscopal residence. That Christmas more than 10,000 Englishmen received Holy Baptism.

On receiving the news, St. Gregory wrote to St. Eulogius, Patriarch of Alexandria: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of goodwill, because a grain of wheat, falling into the earth, has died that it might not reign in heaven alone - even He by Whose death we live, by Whose weakness we are made strong, through Whose love we seek in Britain for brethren whom we know not, by Whose gift we find them whom without knowing we sought."

Augustine now cleansed the pagan temple in which the king had celebrated his idolatrous rites, and in 598 rebuilt and rededicated it in the name of the holy Martyr Pancras. During the first Liturgy there, the building was violently shaken as if by an earthquake, as the devil struggled against his expulsion. The ground next to the church became the site of the Monastery of Saints Peter and Paul. It was consecrated on Christmas Day, 605, and from 611 it acquired stavropegial status as "the first-born and chief mother of monasteries in England". From the time of St. Dunstan, who dedicated it anew in the second half of the tenth century, it became known as St. Augustine's.

In 599 Augustine sent messengers to Rome to seek the answers to certain questions from St. Gregory. These messengers were St. Laurence, later Augustine's successor as archbishop, and St. Peter, first abbot of the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul. They came back in 601 with the answers to the questions and several more missionaries, including Saints Mellitus, Justus and Paulinus.

Having consolidated the position of the Church in Kent, Augustine set off to bring the Gospel to other parts of England. He was a very tall and strong man, and the miraculous signs that accompanied him were similarly great. Thus near York he healed a beggar who had been suffering from blindness and paralysis; he baptized vast numbers of people in the River Swale in Yorkshire; and on leaving York he healed a leper.

From Yorkshire Augustine headed for the borders of Wales, in order to meet the British bishops whose fathers had fled to the West to escape the invasions of the pagan Anglo-Saxons. Augustine had been given authority over the British bishops by St. Gregory; but the task of uniting with the British Christians did not prove to be easy. The first obstacle was that the British, having suffered much from the Anglo-Saxons, were not willing to join with Augustine in trying to convert them to the Faith. The second obstacle was that as a result of their isolation from the Church

on the continent, the British Church had slipped into practices which were at variance with the apostolic traditions. One of these was that they sometimes allowed Pascha to be celebrated on the 14th day of Nisan, whereas the Council of Nicaea had decreed that it should never be celebrated before the 15th. Another was that they performed the sacrament of Baptism in an irregular manner. Augustine stipulated three conditions for union: that the British should correct these two canonical irregularities; and that they should cooperate with him in converting the Saxons.

However, the British refused to accede on any of these points. At length, Augustine suggested that they pray to God to reveal His will in the following manner: "Let a sick person be brought near, and by whosoever's prayers he will be healed, let the faith and works of that one be judged devout before God and an example for men to follow." The British reluctantly agreed, and a blind Saxon was brought before them.

The British clergy tried, but failed to heal him. But through Augustine's prayers he received recovery of his sight. The British were impressed, but pleaded for time in which to discuss these questions with their elders before coming to a decision.

Augustine travelled to his second meeting with the British accompanied by Saints Mellitus and Justus. The British were represented by seven bishops and Abbot Dinoth of the great monastery of Bangor, which had over a thousand monks. Before the meeting they had approached a hermit and asked him how they should answer Augustine. He said that if Augustine rose when they entered, this showed that he was humble and should be obeyed. If he did not rise, then they should not accede to him. Therefore when Augustine did not rise at their entrance, the British became angry and refused both to accept his stipulations and to acknowledge him as their archbishop.

As the meeting broke up, St. Augustine prophesied that since the British had refused to cooperate in the conversion of the pagan English they would themselves be put to sword by the same English - a prophecy which was fulfilled a few years later when the pagan King Ethelfrid of Northumbria defeated the British in battle at Chester and killed 1200 of the monks of Bangor.

On his way back, Augustine passed through Dorset, where he was violently attacked by the inhabitants. At one time they beat him with fish tails, at another they seized weapons and torches. As they were jeering at him, he turned from preaching to prayer, and soon many of the pagans were afflicted with burning ulcers over their whole body. This had the effect of bringing them to their senses, and in the end multitudes were baptized.

Augustine and his companions went on and came to a barren spot, where the

Lord revealed Himself to him. At the same time, a spring of water gushed up and converted the previous wilderness into a garden. Augustine called the place Cernel (now Cerne Abbas), which is compounded of the Hebrew word "El" or "God", and the Latin "Cerno", "I see".

On his return to the East, Augustine baptized King Sebert of Essex and consecrated St. Mellitus as bishop of Sebert's capital, London. In the same year he consecrated St. Justus as bishop of Rochester. Then just before his death he consecrated St. Laurence as his successor at Canterbury. These consecrations by a single bishop were blessed by St. Gregory as an exception to the apostolic rule that bishops should be consecrated by no less than two bishops, because of the fact that there were no other canonical bishops in Britain.

St. Augustine reposed in the Lord on May 26, 605, and was buried next to the unfinished church of Saints Peter and Paul.

He was succeeded by St. Laurence, who assumed the supervision of the English Church and wrote, with his fellow bishops Mellitus and Justus, to the Celtic Christians in Ireland, exhorting them to unity. But to no avail. Moreover, after the death of King Ethelbert in 616, Laurence had to face a revival of idolatry in Kent under Ethelbert's son, Eadbald.

To make things worse, King Sebert of Essex also died, and his three sons, who were pagans, allowed the people to return to idolatry. Once, while St. Mellitus was celebrating the Liturgy, they came into the church and asked the bishop: "Why do you not give to us that which bread which you used to give to our father Saba (for so they used to call him), and which you still continue to give to the people in the church?" Mellitus replied: "If you will be washed in the laver of salvation, in which your father was washed, you may also partake of the holy bread of which he partook; but if you despise the laver of salvation, you may not receive the bread of life." They replied: "We will not enter into that laver, because we do not know that we stand in need of it, and yet we will eat of that bread." Eventually, after a further refusal, they became angry and forced Mellitus to leave London. He then decided to go to France with St. Justus until the storm passed over.

St. Laurence was also about to flee with them. But that night, the holy Apostle Peter appeared to him, and after scourging him for a long time said: "Why would you forsake the flock which has been committed to you? To what shepherds will you commit Christ's sheep who are in the midst of wolves? Have you forgotten my example, who for the sake of those little ones whom Christ recommended to me in token of His love, underwent at the hands of infidels and enemies of Christ, bonds, stripes, imprisonment, afflictions, and lastly, the death of the cross, that I might at last be crowned with Him?" The next morning, St. Laurence went to King Eadbald and, taking off his garment, showed him the scars of the stripes he had received

from the Apostle. The king was astonished and asked who had presumed to give such stripes to such a great man. On hearing the truth, he was terrified, abandoned both his paganism and his unlawful marriage, and was baptized. Then Laurence went to France, and brought Mellitus and Justus back with him. Justus was restored to his see at Rochester, but Mellitus was not able to resume control of his see in London because of the strength of the pagan reaction.

Goscelin relates of St. Laurence that he performed many miracles; he raised the dead, walked on the sea, caused a fountain to spring up in a dry place, and after the manner of the Prophet Elijah brought down fire from heaven to consume the impious. Once, after building and consecrating a church in Scotland (perhaps a men's monastery?), he ordered that no woman should enter it. And when, in the late eleventh century, Queen Margaret of Scotland ventured to enter it, she was repulsed by some invisible force.

St. Laurence reposed on February 2, 619, and was buried in the church of Saints Peter and Paul.

He was succeeded in the archbishopric by St. Mellitus. As we have seen, Mellitus was bishop of London before he succeeded to the archbishopric. And it was he who, at King Sebert's request, came to consecrate the first church at Westminster on the isle of Thorney, which is now the first church of the English capital, to God and the Apostle Peter.

The night before the consecration, according to the tradition related by the Monk Sulcard, while everyone was sleeping, the Apostle Peter appeared on the bank of the Thames and motioned to a fisherman to row him over to the island. After alighting on the island, as the fisherman watched, the apostle created two streams by striking the ground with his staff, and then proceeded to the newly built church to the accompaniment of the melodious voices of angels. Then the astonished spectator saw the heavens opened and the whole island bathed in a heavenly light as heaven and earth joined in magnificent service. Much as he wanted to depart, he was unable to, rooted as he was to the spot by the apostle's chains. And after the service Peter came back to the trembling fisherman and said: "Do not be afraid because of what you have seen and heard, for this is the will of God". Then he explained that he was the Apostle Peter, to whom this church was being dedicated, and that he should relate what he had seen and heard to St. Mellitus. When the bishop would come he would see that the walls had already been sealed with holy chrism, so he would not have to consecrate it. And the fisherman, whose name was Edric, was to present to Mellitus one of a miraculous catch of fish which he would obtain through the apostle's prayers, as a witness to the truth of his words. Everything turned out as the apostle said. The fishermen immediately cast his nets into the water of the river, and pulled in a huge catch of salmon. And St. Mellitus, coming into the church the next day, found the signs of the heavenly consecration

already on the walls.

St. Mellitus suffered greatly from gout, but this did not dampen his zeal in the service of God. Once a great fire had already consumed a large part of Canterbury, and no human means seemed able to stop it. The bishop then ordered that he be carried to the church of the four martyrs, which was in the area where the fire raged most; and after his prayer, the wind suddenly changed from the south to the north, and the city was saved.

St. Mellitus reposed after five years as archbishop of Canterbury, on April 24, 624. He was succeeded by St. Justus, bishop of Rochester, who died in 627. And St. Justus was succeeded by St. Honorius, another Roman monk who had come to England in 601. He promoted missionary work and struggled against both the calendar schism and the Pelagian heresy.

St. Honorius reposed in about 653, and eighteen months later was succeeded by the first native English archbishop, St. Deusdedit, who came from Sussex. He founded the monastery of Peterborough in 657 and a convent in Thanet. He died from the plague on July 14, 664, and was buried, as were all his predecessors, in the church of Saints Peter and Paul in Canterbury.

In 747, at the Council of Clovesho, the days of St. Augustine's birth and repose were declared to be national feast-days. In 1011, when the Danes destroyed Canterbury, a Dane seized the pall from the tomb of St. Augustine and hid it under his arm. However, the pall clung to his flesh as if it had been glue, whereupon he went to the monks and repented. The Danes made no further attacks on the monastery.

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Augustine's biographer, Goscelin, writing towards the end of the eleventh century, records many miracles wrought through his intercession. Here are some of them as presented in Cardinal Newman's retelling of Goscelin's account:-

"A Saxon, named Leodegarius, had been afflicted from his birth with dreadful contractions of the joints of his body, so as almost to resemble a monster rather than a human being. He is said to have passed many years of his life in moving, or rather creeping, from place to place, for, in truth, he wore the appearance of a reptile. He was a native of Germany, whence he had found his way to Rome, in hopes of benefiting by the prayers of some Saint. At length he came to England, and, one day, while watching during the night in the Abbey of St. Peter, at Westminster, he felt himself moved, by a Divine intimation, to seek help in the city of Canterbury.

"The next morning found him on his way to the metropolitan city, which he is said to have reached by taking ship at Greenwich, where, it seems, vessels were stationed for conveying the poor at the public charge. On arriving at Canterbury, a pious matron took pity on him, and provided him with board and lodging for the night. The next day, under her guidance, he repaired to the cathedral, and there, through the intervention of his charitable hostess, was admitted within the sanctuary, or precincts of the high altar. In this place he spent three nights in prayer. On the fourth morning he met with the reward of his perseverance. There appeared to him (as he related) three venerable figures, of patriarchal aspect and mien, bright as angels. The central figure was much taller than the others. His hair was white as snow, and seemed to take the form of a cross upon his ample forehead; his eyes beamed with sweetness, and his whole countenance was radiant and smiling. A priestly robe covered his person, so gorgeous that it seemed to rival the glory of Solomon, and it was confined at the waist by a clasp of gold. In his hand was a cross of great size and dazzling brilliancy. His companion on the right was of middle stature, with eyes of remarkable brightness, and a forehead like snow. On his left was one of dwarfish size, as if recorded of him who desired to receive Christ into his house; but his form was one of perfect symmetry and exquisite beauty. One and all were attired in vestments so rich and magnificent, that earth till then had never seen the like. The three strangers were observed to make for the spot where the poor cripple, with his limbs gathered up, was lying on the pavement. His infirmity was of such a kind as to render variety of posture impracticable; standing, sitting, lying, and kneeling were all alike to him.

"On reaching him the strangers suddenly paused. The poor helpless creature gazed on them with an awe which came near to terror. At length the central priest beckoned to his companion on the left, to signify to the cripple that they came as ministers of mercy. He approached him and said, it was blessed Augustine who had come to heal him. Hardly had the name of Augustine passed his lips when the other seemed to hear God speaking to him, and addressing himself to the chief visitor, 'It is you,' he said, 'most clement father, whom I see; you, of all the Saints, a Divine voice has told it me, are to be my deliverer.' Thereupon St. Augustine deputed his two companions to exercise the gift of healing, and they proceeded to lift him up, the one applying the hand of power to the upper part of his body, the other implanting strength in his knees and ankle-bones. The cure is described as more painful than the malady. While it was in progress (for it was not instantaneous) the poor man, as we read, cried out lustily for mercy. At length his body, which had been a mass of disease and deformity, assumed its natural shape, and the three wonderful benefactors disappeared in the direction of their several tombs. Meanwhile, the sacristan and keepers of the church, who had been aroused from their sleep by cries of distress proceeding from the sanctuary, had repaired to the spot, where to their astonishment they found the poor man, whose hapless condition they had commiserated the day before, in the full possession of health and activity. He related to them the circumstances of his visit to Canterbury, and

learned that the three shrines from which they had appeared to issue, and among which his eyes had afterwards lost them, were those of St. Augustine and his two companions, St. Laurence and St. Mellitus. These, then, were the strangers on right and left.

"A great number of the miraculous narratives of which St. Augustine of Canterbury is the subject have their scene on the wide ocean... Among those a foremost place is given by Goscelin to the wonderful preservation of King Canute from perils on the sea, on his return from his great pilgrimage to Rome [in 1031]. A terrible storm is said to have overtaken him when he was just within sight of the English shore. He betook himself to St. Augustine, whose favour he had experienced throughout his travels, and vowed large gifts to his shrine. Soon after, the storm ceased, and the vessel got safe to shore.

"A somewhat similar intervention was vouchsafed in the case of Egelvius, Abbot of Ethelingey, who had also been to Rome to pay his devotions at the tomb of the Apostles. On his return home, he and his companions were detained six full weeks by contrary winds, during which time their money was all expended in the purchase of necessaries, and they were obliged to sell their horses and apparel. At length one of the party, a monk, named Withgar, of age and prudence, encouraged the Abbot to look for help from the guardianship and intercessions of his island Saints, and besought him to implore their good offices. The Abbot complied, and chiefly betook himself to St. Augustine, who held a first place among the holy patrons of England, vowing that should he ever again be granted a sight of his beloved abbey, he would erect from the foundation a tower to the honour of God, under his tutelage. Then falling asleep, there appeared to him a ship rapidly approaching him, in which was one of priestly dignity and heavenly beauty, clad in shining vestments, who waved his hand to the home-sick pilgrims as if inviting them to him. Then the Abbot awoke, and while he was relating the vision to his companion, the pilot rushed in full of joy, with the tidings that a favourable breeze had sprung up, and that no time was to be lost. The ship reached England in safety. The Abbot, upon his arrival, repaired to Canterbury, where the hospitable successor of our Saint received him with open arms, and like a worthy steward of the bounty of such a father, set himself to make good the losses of his guest.

"The good Abbot was faithful to his vow, and laid the foundation of his tower. He obtained, not without difficulty, six great beams; the seventh, long refused, was at last given for love of the Saint. When they came to measure it, it was found half a yard too short; and the Abbot, not without hope that the Saint might once more grant him his aid, measured it again, and found it now as much too long as it had been before too short. His workman was about to make it the right length; but this the Abbot would by no means allow, as esteeming it a disrespect to the Saint's overflowing bounty...

"Elfnoth, a member of one of the principal families of London, had been brought up from his childhood in St. Augustine's under the care of Abbot Ulfric. He had been staying in Normandy with Duke William, and was on his return to England, when, midway across the Channel, a storm arose. The ship was wrecked, and all perished, with the single exception of the young Elfnoth, who ceased not to call on his holy father for help; when, at length descrying a broken mast in the water, he threw himself upon it and there remained, the sport of the waves. His faith was tried for two whole days and nights; the third morning dawned in serenity, and he was rescued from death by a friendly vessel from the Norman coast.

"Goscelin also speaks of certain monks of St. Augustine's, contemporaries of his own, and alive when he wrote, who had made the following statement upon their oaths. On a certain year, about Pentecost, they were on their way from Constantinople to Venice, and had on board 150 men, many of them learned clergy and laymen, besides a number of others. The wind rose, and became so strong as to endanger a vessel thus heavily laden. They took in their sails, and, availing themselves of the first anchorage they found, remained for several days exposed to the violent beating of the waves. It so happened, in the year in question, that the festival of St. Augustine [May 26] fell during Whitsuntide, and various were the feelings under which the holy brethren looked forward to its near approach at so trying and anxious a time. On the one hand, it was a grief to them that they must celebrate it to such disadvantage; on the other, they could not but esteem it providential that a season so full of promise should befall at such a moment. It happened that on board were several Greeks as well as Italians, and it was a great delight to the holy brethren to spend the mean season in recounting to them the history of the Saint whose day was coming on. They told how the illustrious Gregory, Augustine's spiritual father, had been connected with those very parts, having lived for some time at Constantinople...; and how, out of his great charity to the English nation, he had sent this Augustine to preach Christ among them. With such delightful converse did they beguile the weary time; and at length the whole party on board were wrought into a kind of enthusiasm at the prospect of honouring God in Augustine, spiritual child of Gregory, and apostle of the English nation. They added, that among all the Saints of their own country, there was not one so powerful in his intercession, so large in his munificence, as blessed Augustine; neither did they doubt that, should the crew join in commemorating him with a holy unanimity, some mighty deliverance might be expected to follow. The next Sunday was the day of his festival, and whatever outward accompaniments of ceremonial splendour there lacked, were more than supplied by the overflowing joy of the heart. The Vespers of the Saint were chanted by the numerous body of priests and clerics, all the crew assisting at the service, and then the night was spent in watching, with prayer and praise. In the glowing words of the biographer: 'The ship was our church, its mast the watch-tower of Sion; the sail-yard our cross, the sails our drapery, the prow our altar, the priest boatswain, the arch-priest pilot, the rowers clerics; the creaking cables our instruments of music,

the whistlings of the wind our bellows and pipes. Around us were the spacious courts of ocean, and the countless multitude of the waves responded to the voice of the chanters by their incessant dashings. The church of the waters resounded with the note, "O ye seas and floods, bless ye the Lord, bless Him O ye whales and all that move in the waters," and the waters joined in the response with the quires above; all sang of Christ in high solemnity, and of Augustine, the servant of Christ.'

"Lauds were chanted towards daybreak, and then all retired to rest except the helmsman. He remained observing the stars, and trying the wind. On a sudden it came home to him that St. Augustine's agency had been blessed. The violent wind subsided into the softest of breezes, and that a favourable one. He blew his whistle and shouted aloud, and for a moment the sleepers doubted whether all were not over. But a moment after they were greeted with the joyful words, 'Up, comrades: God is with us;' and the pilot continued, 'It is St. Augustine, whose Feast we are keeping; he is helmsman, boatswain, master, and all.' All were speedily on the alert, and Mass was sung in high jubilee.

"Goscelin relates many other histories of the same description. One more only shall be selected. In the village of Chilham, nor far from Canterbury, was a little girl, eight years of age, the hope and comfort of a widowed mother. She was the life and spirit of her home; but some sad chance befell her, by which she lost the power of speech. Her mother, instead of having recourse to a human physician, took her to the parish priest, by name Elfhelm, who addressed her as follows:- 'The Feast of St. Augustine is at hand; go then and prepare a waxen taper, and with it watch out the vigil of that day whereon the Day-spring from on high first visited us; and let your child be the companion of your prayers. If you will but persevere in faith, we verily believe that, through God's goodness, you will not be disappointed.' The devout matron, armed with faith, and as at the bidding of an angel, is ready with the light on the appointed day, and repairs with her child to the shrine of her heavenly physician, where both keep vigil in prayer... The mother prays and utters her plaints aloud; the daughter can but sigh and vent her devotion and her grief in low inarticulate sounds; but the ears of the Saint are open to both. Now swell on high, at the close of matins, the solemn words of the hymn to the Thrice-Holy, the Abbot intoning the first notes, and his children of the monastery taking up the strain in chorus. When they come to the words, 'The Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee', the tongue of the damsel was suddenly loosened, and she was able to bear her part in the chorus of the Universal Church."

In modern times, St. Augustine is believed to have interceded to save the British army during the evacuation from Dunkirk in 1940. The operation began on May 26, 1940, which is the feast of St. Augustine according to the Anglican church calendar; and King George V asked that that day be declared a National Day of Prayer, calling on the people of Britain and the Empire "to commit their cause to

God". In the opinion of many, the successful evacuation of the British army from Dunkirk was nothing short of a miracle, for which God and God's apostle to England, St. Augustine, must undoubtedly be given glory.

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In 1091, during rebuilding of the monastery, St. Augustine's relics were uncovered and found to be incorrupt. And on September 6, and a week later, on September 13, the bodies of all six of the first archbishops of Canterbury, Saints Augustine (597-605), Lawrence (605-619), Mellitus (619-624), Justus (624-627), Honorius (627-653), Deusdedit (655-664) and Theodore (668-690) were buried in St. Augustine's Abbey. They were translated into new tombs to the accompaniment of many miracles. A translation feast was thereafter kept at Canterbury on September 13. Archbishops Berhtwald (693-731), Tatwin (731-734), Nothelm (735-739) and Jambert (765-792) were also buried in the Abbey.

St. Augustine is commemorated on May 26, St. Lawrence on February 2, St. Mellitus on April 24, St. Justus on November 10, St. Honorius on September 30, and St. Deusdedit on July 15.

Holy Fathers Augustine, Lawrence, Mellitus, Justus, Honorius and Deusdedit, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *A History of the English Church and People*; St. Gregory the Great, *Epistles*; Goscelin, *Historia Translationis S. Augustini*, books I and II; Monk Sulcard, *Libellus de Fundatione Abbatiae Westmonasteriensis*, P.L. CLV, 1636-1638; John Henry Newman, *Lives of the English Saints*, London: Freemantle, 1901, volume 3; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*; Fr. Andrew Phillips, "A Canterbury Tale: The Miracle at Dunkirk", in *Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition*, Frithgarth: English Orthodox Trust, 1995, pp. 463-466; Nicholas Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury,* London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1996; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 35-36)

11. SAINT BATHILD, QUEEN OF FRANCE AND ABBESS OF CHELLES

Our holy Mother Bathild was an Anglo-Saxon slave-girl who was sold into the household of the mayor of the Frankish imperial palace, Erchinoald, in the first half of the seventh century. Being beautiful in body and humble and obedient in soul, she quickly won the favour of the prince, and was nearly always in his presence, even bringing him drinks in his bedroom. She also served the older women in the household, washing their feet, dressing them and helping them in every way.

When Erchinoald's wife died, he wanted to marry the beautiful English virgin. But she hid herself from him, and Erchinoald eventually took a different woman to be his wife. Then Divine Providence, which raises the poor from the dung-hill, arranged that Bathild should attract the attention of the King of France, Clovis II, and in the year 649 they were married. From this marriage three sons were born: Clotaire III, Childeric II and Thierry III.

St. Bathild proved to be an exemplary queen. Using her influence with the king her husband, and with the help of Abbot Genesius (later Bishop of Lyons), she gave great alms to the poor and to the churches of God. After the death of King Clovis in 657, she became regent of the kingdom during the minority of her son Clotaire. She founded the monasteries of Corbie and Chelles, gave generous alms to many others, and urged hierarchs and abbots to enforce the keeping of the monastic rules. She supported the work of Saints Ouen and Leger, put an end to the simoniac buying of offices in the Church, suppressed the slave-trade of which she herself had been a victim, and redeemed many slaves. Indeed, through her work France may be considered the first nation to have eliminated the slave trade. In the political sphere, the Austrasians were persuaded to accept her son Childeric as their king, which led to the union of the Franks and the Burgundians.

However, in 667 a plot hatched by Bishop Sigebrandus, which caused her sons to entertain unjust suspicions of her temporarily, led to her retirement to the monastery of Chelles, near Paris. There she remained in obedience to Abbess Berthille until her death, performing all the humblest tasks and displaying all the virtues to perfection.

Finally, when she had fallen ill with a very painful intestinal disease and was close to death, a beautiful vision was shown to her. She saw a ladder standing in front of the church of the Mother of God, the summit of which touched the heavens; and it was as if Bathild herself was ascending the ladder in the company of the holy angels. The saint now realized that her end was approaching, but she hid this from the abbess for fear that she would fall ill from sadness. And so, having raised her eyes and hands to heaven, her holy soul was released in peace, and a heavenly light covered her bed. This took place in the year 680, very shortly after the death of her

god-daughter, a little girl whom she had wanted to accompany her into the next world.

Many miracles were wrought through the intercession of the saint after her death. Once a bishop came to the monastery and brought his child, who was demon-possessed and very violent, to the sepulchre of the saint. The demon cast the child half-dead onto the pavement; but he stood up, crossed himself, thanked God and returned to his parents completely sane.

According to William of Malmesbury, some of St. Bathild's relics were deposited at Glastonbury.

St. Bathild is commemorated on January 30.

Holy Mother Bathild, pray to God for us!

(Sources: *Life* in *M.G.H. Scriptores rerum merov.*, ii, 475-508; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 32; William of Malmesbury, *The Early History of Glastonbury*, edited by John Scott, The Bodyell Press, Woodbridge, 1981, p. 71; Fr. Romaric D'Amico)

12. SAINT BEDE THE VENERABLE OF JARROW

Our holy Father Bede the Venerable was born in the year 673 on the lands of the monastery of St. Paul at Jarrow in Northumbria in the North of England. At the age of seven he was entrusted to the first abbot of Jarrow, St. Benedict Biscop, and after his repose to his successor, St. Ceolfrid. There is a tradition that during a plague that swept England during St. Ceolfrid's abbacy, only the abbot and the young thirteen-year-old Bede were left to chant the services.

One of Bede's earliest recollections was being taught the meaning of the word "sacrifice" through two icons: one of Isaac carrying the wood for his own sacrifice at the hands of his father, and the other of Christ carrying His Cross to Golgotha. He learned Latin, Greek and Hebrew, becoming an exceptional scholar. And he carried out all the monastic obediences: winnowing, threshing, milking, baking, gardening and feeding the animals.

At the age of nineteen Bede was ordained to the diaconate by St. John, bishop of Beverley, and to the priesthood by the same holy bishop when he was thirty years old. "From the time of my receiving the priesthood," writes Bede, "until my fifty-ninth year, I have worked, both for my own benefit and that of my brethren, to compile short extracts from the works of the venerable Fathers on Holy Scripture and to comment on their meaning and interpretation. And while I have observed the regular discipline and sung the church services daily in church, my chief delight has always been in study, teaching and writing." "I am my own secretary. I dictate, I compose, I copy all myself." In addition to 25 commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, he wrote his famous *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, *Lives of the Holy Abbots*, a *Letter to Egbert* (archbishop of York, which may have stimulated the founding of the famous school of York) and other works. If his contemporary, St. Aldhelm, may be considered (with Caedmon of Whitby) the Father of English poetry, then the Venerable Bede must be considered the Father of English prose and history.

So successful was he in fulfilling this calling, that his works became the staple education of generations of Christians in the lands of North-West Europe. St. Boniface, the enlightener of Germany, wrote to England for copies of his works, and on hearing of his repose said: "The candle of the Church, lit by the Holy Spirit, is extinguished." And Alcuin, the abbot of St. Martin's at Tours, called him "the school-master of his age". Alcuin related that Bede used to say: "I well know that angels visit the congregations of brethren at the canonical hours. What if they should not find me there among my brethren? Will they not say, 'Where is Bede? Why comes he not with his brethren to the prescribed hours?'"

St. Bede's last illness and blessed repose was described by Cuthbert, later abbot of Jarrow:- "He lived joyfully, giving thanks to God day and night, yea, at all hours, until the feast of the Ascension. Every day he gave lessons to us, his pupils, and the rest of

the time he occupied himself in chanting psalms. He was awake almost the whole night and spent it in joy and thanksgiving. And when he awoke from his short sleep, immediately he raised his hands on high and began to give thanks. He sang the words of the Apostle Paul, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God'. He sang much else besides from the Holy Scriptures, and also many Anglo-Saxon hymns. He sang antiphons according to our and his custom, and among others this one: 'O King of Glory, Lord of Power, who this day didst ascend as Victor above all the heavens, leave us not orphaned behind Thee, but send us the promised Spirit of the Father, Alleluia.' And when he came to the words 'leave us not orphaned behind Thee', he burst into tears. Then, an hour later, he began to sing again. We wept with him; now we read, then we wept; but we could not read without tears. Often he would thank God for sending him this illness, and would say, 'God chasteneth the son whom He loveth'. Often, too, he would repeat the words of St. Ambrose: 'I have not lived so as to be ashamed to live amongst you; neither do I fear to die, for we have a good Lord.' Besides the lessons which he gave us, and his psalm-singing during these days, he composed two important works - a translation of the Gospel of St. John into our native tongue, and extracts from St. Isidore of Seville; for he said, 'I would not that my pupils should read what is false and after my death should labour in vain.'

"On the Tuesday before the Ascension his sickness increased, his breathing became difficult, and his feet began to swell. Yet he passed the whole night joyfully dictating. At times he would say, 'Make haste to learn, for I do not know how long I shall remain with you, and whether my Creator will not soon take me to Himself.' The following night he spent in prayers of thanksgiving. And when Wednesday dawned he desired us diligently to continue writing what we had begun. When this was finished we carried the relics in procession, as is customary on that day. One of us then said to him, 'Dearest master, we have yet one chapter to translate. Will it be grievous to thee if we ask thee any further?' He answered, 'It is quite easy: take the pen and write quickly.' At the ninth hour he said to me, 'Run quickly and call the priests of this monastery to me, that I may impart to them the gifts which God has given me. The rich of this world seek to give gold and silver and other costly things; but with great love and joy will I give my brethren what God has given me.' Then he begged every one of them to celebrate the Liturgy and pray for him. They all wept, mainly because he said that they would not see his face again in this world. But they rejoiced in that he said: 'It is time that I go to my Creator. I have lived enough. The time of my departure is at hand; for I long to depart and be with Christ.'

"Thus did he live till evening [the eve of the feast of the Ascension, May 26, 735]. Then the scholar [Cuthbert] said to him: 'Dearest master, there is only one sentence left to write.' 'Write quickly,' he answered. 'It is finished. Raise my head in thy hand, for it will do me good to sit opposite the sanctuary where I used to kneel and pray, that sitting thus I may call upon my Father.' So he seated himself on the ground of his cell and sang, 'Glory to Thee, O God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit'.

"And when he had named the Holy Spirit he breathed his last."

He was first buried in the porch of the church at Jarrow, but was then moved nearer the altar. Alcuin writes that miraculous healings were wrought at the relics of St. Bede, and that portions of them were taken to York, to Glastonbury and to Fulda in Germany, where they were placed in the crypt with St. Boniface. The rest of his body remained at Jarrow, where great numbers of pilgrims came to venerate it.

In 1020, however, the priest Alfred Westow secretly took some of his relics to Durham cathedral, where they remain to this day. When his friends asked him where the bones of the Venerable Bede were, he would reply: "No one knows this better than I do. Dearly beloved, consider this a thing most firmly and most certainly established, that the same shrine which contains the most holy body of Father Cuthbert, contains also the bones of the teacher and monk Bede."

There are several stories about how St. Bede came to receive the title 'Venerable', which is first known to have been given him at the Council of Aachen in 836.

One of these stories tells that late in life Bede became almost blind. One day some jesters came to him and said that there were some people in the church waiting to hear the word of God. In fact there was no-one there except the jesters. So, ever anxious for the salvation of others, the saint went to the church and preached, not knowing that it was empty. When he had ended his sermon, he prayed, and, instead of a human response, he received one from the angels: "Amen, very Venerable Bede".

St. Bede is commemorated on May 26. His relics are to be found in Durham cathedral.

Holy Father Bede, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The *Works* of the Venerable Bede; William Hunt, *The English Church*, London: Macmillan, 1912; Simeon of Durham, *History of the Church of Durham*; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1978; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 342, 367-370; Brian Plumb, "Characters in Catholic History. St. Bede the Venerable", *Catholic Life,* April, 2009, pp. 47-49)

13. SAINTS BENEDICT, SIGFRID AND CEOLFRID (GEOFFREY), ABBOTS OF WEARMOUTH AND JARROW

Our holy Father Benedict was born in 628 into a noble Northumbrian family with the name Biscop Baducing, and was in the service of King Oswy of Northumbria. At the age of twenty-five, he abandoned the world and went with St. Wilfrid, Bishop of York, to Rome. Then he went a second time, after which he became a monk in the monastery of St. Honoratus in Lérins. After two years in the monastery, he went for a third time to Rome, where the pope ordered him to accompany St. Theodore, the newly-ordained archbishop of Canterbury, back to England. This he did, and was made abbot of St. Peter's monastery in Canterbury by St. Theodore.

After ruling this monastery for two years, the saint made a fourth visit to Rome, returning with many books and holy relics. At first he decided to go to the court of King Conwalh of Wessex, who had helped him in the past. But Conwalh died suddenly, so Benedict made his way to the court of King Egfrith of Northumbria, who in 674 gave him seventy hides of land to build a monastery.

After a year, during which the saint established his monastery firmly in the tradition of St. Benedict of Nursia and in accordance with the customs he had seen in seventeen other monasteries, he went to Gaul, where he persuaded some Frankish stonemasons and glassmakers to come to England and build a church for him. They came, and taught their craft to local men. The saint also bought vestments and sacred vessels and icons to adorn his church of St. Peter.

In 679 St. Benedict made yet another trip to Rome, returning with innumerable books and relics, and also John, archcantor of the church of St. Peter in Rome, who taught the English monks the liturgy, script and chanting of the Roman Church.

King Egfrith was delighted with the saint's work, and in 682 he gave him another forty hides of land, on which the saint built his second monastery, dedicated to St. Paul. Now he placed Eosterwine as abbot of the monastery of St. Peter, and St. Ceolfrith as abbot of the monastery of St. Paul. The new monastery, writes Bede, "was built on the understanding that the two houses should be bound together by the one spirit of peace and harmony".

In 685 the saint made his last trip to Rome, and returned with many books, relics, vestments and icons. On his return he found that King Egfrith had been murdered, and that Abbot Eosterwine had died of the plague in 686, together with many of the brethren. He appointed Sigfrid in the place of Eosterwine. But then both Sigfrid and Benedict were struck by illness. Benedict lived for three whole years in a state of paralysis.

Before his death, writes the Venerable Bede, the two abbots "expressed a desire to

see one another before they died, and Sigfrid was brought in a litter into the room where Benedict was lying on his bed, though they were placed by the attendants with their heads on the same pillow, they had not the power of their own strength to kiss one another, but were assisted even in this act of fraternal love. After taking counsel with Sigfrid and the other brethren, Benedict sent for Ceolfrith, abbot of St. Paul's, dear to him not by the relationship of the flesh, but by the ties of Christian virtue, and with the consent and approbation of all, made him abbot of both monasteries."

St. Benedict died on January 14, 689. Abbot Sigfrid died two months later. His relics were purchased by St. Ethelwold of Winchester in the tenth century and taken to Thorney. He is commemorated on January 12.

Our holy Father Ceolfrith (Geoffrey) was born of noble and religious parents in the seventh century. At the age of eighteen he entered a monastery at Gilling where his brother Cynefrith was abbot. When Cynefrith retired to Ireland, their relative Tunberht, later bishop of Hexham, became abbot.

Soon a pestilence visited the area, and the abbot and several of the brethren, including Ceolfrith, were invited by St. Wilfrid to his monastery in Ripon, where, at the age of twenty-seven, Ceolfrith was ordained to the priesthood.

Then Ceolfrith, in search of greater knowledge, set off for Canterbury and then the monastery of St. Botulf at Ikanhoe in East Anglia, where, in addition to his priestly duties, he served as baker and instructed the other brethren in the observance of the rule of St. Benedict.

In 674 he was invited north by St. Benedict Biscop, and together they began to build a monastery dedicated to St. Peter at Wearmouth on land donated by King Egfrith of Northumbria. At one point the jealousy of some brethren forced him to leave and return to his former monastery, but St. Benedict persuaded him to return. And he accompanied Benedict on one of his trips to Rome.

In 682 King Egfrith gave land for the building of a second monastery, dedicated to St. Paul, at Jarrow, and St. Benedict appointed St. Ceolfrith as the first abbot. In 689, on the death of St. Benedict, Ceolfrith was appointed abbot of both monasteries. Under his rule, the number of the brethren rose to 600, the library was doubled and the prosperity of the monastery increased.

According to the Venerable Bede, who was one of his monks in Jarrow, "having shown the most incomparable skill in praying and chanting, in which he daily exercised himself, together with the most wonderful energy in punishing the wicked, and modesty in consoling the weak; having also observed such abstinence in food and drink, and such humility in dress, as are uncommon among rulers; saw himself now old and full of days, and unfit any longer, from his extreme age, to prescribe to his

brethren the proper forms of spiritual exercise by his life and doctrine. Having, therefore, deliberated long within himself, he judged it expedient, having first impressed on the brethren the observance of the rules which St. Benedict had given them, and thereby to choose for themselves a more efficient abbot out of their own number, to depart, himself, to Rome…"

Having commissioned the writing of three single-volume Bibles from his scriptoria, he gave one to Wearmouth, one to Jarrow, and took the third with him on his journey in order to give to the pope. This last book, known as the Codex Amiatinus, exists to this day, and is the oldest surviving complete Bible in one volume.

Ceolfrid set off for Rome accompanied by eighty men on June 4, 716, but on September 25 he died in the French city of Langres at the age of seventy-four. The anonymous writer of his life records that "the companions of our father, beloved of God, who returned to us, used to tell us that in the night after his venerable body had been committed to the tomb, while three guards of the same church were keeping the night watch, according to the custom, the fragrance of a wonderful odour filled the whole church; and it was followed by a light, which remained no little time; and finally rose to the roof of the church. They went out quickly, and gazing they saw the same light rapidly rise to the skies, so that all places round about seemed to be illumined by the glow, as if it were daytime; so that it was clearly given them to understand that ministers of eternal light and perpetual sweetness had been present and had consecrated by their visitation the resting-place of the holy body. Hence a custom spread among the natives of the place that throughout the various chorus of daily and nightly prayer, when the canonical rule of psalmody was ended, all the men should bend their knees in supplication at his tomb. And also report spread abroad that other signs and cures were done there, by the Grace of Him Who is wont to aid His saints as they strive in this present life and to crown them victors in the life to come. Amen."

St. Ceolfrid's body was moved from Langres to Monkwearmouth during the Viking raids. From there it was moved to Glastonbury, but his grave is now lost.

Holy Fathers Benedict, Sigfrid and Ceolfrith, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Lives of the Holy Abbots;* Anonymous, *Life of St. Ceolfrith;* David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 39-40; Tony Galcius, "Benet Biscop. Founder of Northumbria's Twin Monasteries", *Catholic Life,* February, 2010, pp. 22-23; David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 81-82; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 116, 367-370)

14. SAINT BENIGNUS OF GLASTONBURY

St. Benignus (Beonna) is not commemorated on Anglo-Saxon calendars, and it is possible that in some details of his life he has been confused with an Irish saint of a

similar name. Nevertheless, there is fairly strong evidence that there was a holy man of this name living near Glastonbury.

According to our main source, William of Malmesbury, St. Benignus was born in Ireland, and was converted to Christianity together with his whole family by St. Patrick. Benignus became very attached to St. Patrick and left home to follow him. In 442 Patrick founded a monastery at Druimlias, and three years later made Benignus the abbot. He remained there for 20 years, and was then made Bishop of Armagh, dying in 468.

According to another of William's works, however, Benignus did not die in Ireland but resigned his bishopric and came to Somerset in about 460, establishing himself as a hermit at Meare (Ferramere), about three miles from Glastonbury. “How much favour he found with God is revealed by many signs and miracles; witness the marks of his presence still at Meare, the broad expanse of water granted at his prayers and the huge leafy tree that flourished from his withered staff.” He built a causeway from his hermitage to the Old Church at Glastonbury, and since his servant Pincius had to go a long way to get water he caused a spring to break out next to his cell by his prayers. He died at Meare “after endless struggles”, and until about 1530 the church at Meare was called S. Bennynge. The following inscription was on his tomb:

In this tomb Father Beonna's bones are placed,
Who was father of the monks in ancient times.
He was, in all probability, Patrick's servant for a long time.
So say the Hibernians, and they call him 'Beonna'.

It is usually thought that St. Benignus or Beonna was an Irish hermit whom the Irish pilgrims to Glastonbury associated with St. Patrick. However, some scholars believe that he was a Saxon, since "Beonna" is a Saxon name. H.M Porter suggests that "Beon was an Irishman and that the Irish schoolmasters [of St. Dunstan, in the early 10th century] called him Beonna when talking about him to the local Saxons and further confused matters by identifying him with Benen or Benignus [of Armagh]."

In 901, St. Benignus' relics were translated to Glastonbury. According to John of Glastonbury, they were taken by boat from Mere to Glastonbury, but the boat had to berth some way from the monastery, so the relics were then carried on foot to a spot about halfway between the landing place and the monastery. There a sermon on the life of the saint was delivered, together with the reasons for the translation. After the sermon one of the bones of the saint was removed from the reliquary and the sign of the cross was made with it over the crowd, whereupon "such grace of Divine generosity flowed out upon the people that those vexed with various illnesses and those who bore the dangers of diverse infirmities, the blind, the mute, and the lame, were healed. Many, whom the agony of their internal organs tortured, vomited forth the death hidden within them." Then the relics were taken on to the monastery, where

a new church dedicated to the saint was built at the place where they rested.

In 1027 King Hardacanute donated a shrine in which, in the time of Abbot Thurstand (1100-1116) the relics of St. Benignus were placed. In 1475 and again in 1487 reference was made to the saint's church, and it is known that a church dedicated to St. Benignus stood to the west of the monastery ruins until sometime in the last century, when it was rededicated to St. Benedict.

Holy Father Benignus, pray to God for us!

(Sources: William of Malmesbury, *The Early History of Glastonbury*, edited by John Scott, The Bodyell Press, Woodbridge, 1981, pp. 63, 157, 170-171; Lionel Smithett Lewis, *Glastonbury - Her Saints*, Wellingborough: Thorsons, 1985, pp. 18-19; John Seal, *The Dark Age Saints of Somerset*, Lampeter: Llanerch Enterprises, 1995, pp. 87-90; H.M. Porter, *The Celtic Church in Somerset*, Bath, 1971, pp. 61-63)

15. SAINT BERTRAM OF ILAM AND STAFFORD

Our holy Father Bertram (Bettelin) was the son of a king of Mercia in the eighth century. Thinking of monasticism, he travelled to Ireland, where he fell in love with a beautiful princess. He brought her back to England, and they were living in a forest near Stafford, where a child was born to them. One day Bertram went to look for food. While he was away, wolves came and killed his wife and child.

Overcome with grief, he renounced his royal heritage and turned to God. According to one source, he became a disciple of St. Guthlac (+ April 11, 716) at Crowland, and reported the saint's death to his sister, St. Pega. Many pagans were converted by the example of his heremitic life. Without revealing his identity, he approached the royal court of Mercia and asked for a plot of land to build a hermitage. He was granted some land at Bethnei, near Stafford.

A new king came to the throne, and demanded back the land on which the hermitage was built. It was decided that the matter should be decided through a duel. Bertram prayed that someone would come forward to fight his cause. A dwarf came forward. Bertram remembered the story of David and Goliath and accepted his offer. The dwarf won the contest, and Bertram kept his land.

Once the devil tempted the saint as he had once tempted Christ, to turn stones into bread. Bertram prayed rather that bread would be turned into stones. His prayer was answered, and the devil was defeated.

Seeking solitude from the many people who sought his advice, Bertram went to live in a cave near Ilam in Derbyshire, and lived there until his death. He was buried in Holy Cross church in Ilam, where there are Saxon remains, two Saxon crosses in the courtyard and a holy well. The remains of his shrine are from the 14th century, but the tomb cover is 9th century. It is not known whether the saint's relics are inside.

In 1386 a blind man was cured through prayer at the tomb of St. Bertram.

St. Bertram is commemorated on August 10.

Holy Father Bertram, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Nova Legenda Angliae; John H. Newman, Lives of the English Saints, London, 1901, volume III, pp. 64-79; http://www.stmichaels-audley.org.uk/orthodox.htm; http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/servbert.htm#serfeltop; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 307-308)

16. SAINT BIRINUS, BISHOP OF DORCHESTER-ON-THAMES

Our holy Father Birinus was of Italian, or, according to some accounts, Irish origin, and was a Benedictine monk. The future hierarch was probably born in Lombardy in c. 600. Unfortunately, nothing is known about his childhood and early years, but he lived as a monk in Rome some time before becoming a bishop. In the year 634 in Genoa, Archbishop Asterius consecrated him bishop and in the same year Pope Honorius sent him to Britain, which was then still mostly pagan.

Then he boarded a ship at Genoa for England. However, at that point he suddenly remembered that he had left on the seashore his antimins [a portable altar-cloth containing relics of the saints, upon which the Divine Liturgy is celebrated], without which he could not perform his apostolic ministry. But putting his faith in God, he boldly stepped out across the stormy waters, recovered the antimins on the seashore, and walked back to the ship, which stood as if immobilized in the middle of the sea. The sailors were astonished to sea that his vestments were not even wet.

In about the year 634 the bishop landed at Porchester (according to another account, Southampton) on the south coast of Britain, in the Kingdom of Wessex. He intended to go further inland where there were no missionaries, but since he met only pagans in Wessex, he realized that he must remain there. Moving from settlement to settlement, he preached the Word of God, healing the sick, working numerous miracles and converting many pagans to the Christian faith. An old woman who had been blind and deaf for several years was told in a vision to go to St. Birinus, and he healed her by making the sign of the Cross over her eyes and ears.

Birinus then travelled to the court of King Cynegils of Wessex, who welcomed him and gave him permission to preach to the people. In 635 King Cynegils and many of his people were baptized by Birinus in the ancient Roman town of Dorcec, now Dorchester-on-Thames, which became his episcopal see and the centre of his ministry. The king's sponsor at his baptism was none other than the future great Martyr-King Oswald of Northumbria. "Lovely indeed and well pleasing to God" was the relationship between the two kings, says Bede. St. Oswald gave his daughter to King Cynegils in marriage.

In 636 Birinus baptized King Cynegils' son, Cwichelm, at Dorchester, and in the same year Cwichelm reposed. In 639 the saint also baptized Cwichelm's son, Cuthred, and stood sponsor for him. But Cynegils' other son, Cenwalh, initially

refused baptism, and became Christian, not through Birinus, but through St. Felix, bishop of Dunwich in East Anglia.

Among the churches founded by the Apostle of Wessex we should mention the church of the Holy Virgin in Reading (Berkshire), St. Helen's church in Abingdon (Oxfordshire) as well as the church in the village of Taplow (Buckinghamshire), where the saint performed a mass baptism in Bapsey Pool. (All these churches, though rebuilt during the following centuries, exist to this day, and Bapsey Pool has survived as well). At Tapley we can still see the pool in which he baptised, called Bapsey pool. At Wing a Saxon reliquary crypt dating from the early eighth century still survives. At Churn Knob near Blewbury, a cross marks the spot where St. Birinus gave a sermon in the presence of King Cynegils of Wessex in 634.

King Cynegils died in 643, and in 648 his successor, King Cenwalh, asked Birinus to build and consecrate a minster church in Winchester, his capital. As Winchester was an important political centre, it later became the major spiritual centre of Wessex as well.

On December 3, 650 St. Birinus reposed and was buried at his episcopal see. In about 690, St. Hedda, bishop of Winchester, removed the relics to Winchester, and they were translated into a new shrine by St. Ethelwold in response to a Divine vision on September 4, 980. Numerous miracles occurred at his relics and pilgrims flocked to them.

In 1140, on the site of the first early English foundation of St. Birinus, a new, Augustinian monastery appeared. This monastery existed until the Reformation. In the 1530s Henry VIII dissolved the Abbey, but the former Abbey church, purchased by the town's residents, survived. The medieval shrine of St. Birinus was restored as late as 1964. Today this shrine can be found in the south aisle of the Abbey church. And relics of the holy enlightener of Wessex are most likely concealed under the floor of the church.

It should be added that St. Birinus is still specially commemorated at Winchester Cathedral. This, the longest cathedral in Europe, preserves a memorial Cross of St. Birinus with small fragments of his Shrine, in front of which there is a row of nine Orthodox icons, painted by the Russian iconographer Sergei Fyodorov in the 1990s—the icon of St. Birinus is first on the left. These icons can be found on the west screen of the Cathedral's retrochoir.

Holy Father Birinus, pray to God for us!

St. Birinus is commemorated on December 3 and September 4.

(Sources: the Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*; *Nova*

Legenda Anglie, vol. 1, 118-122; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978; Margaret Gallyon, *The Early Church in Wessex and Mercia*, Lavenham: Terence Dalton, 1980; Margaret Hancock, "St. Birinus and Dorchester Abbey", *Catholic Life*, November, 2007, pp. 36-38; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 16-17, 72-73, 74-75; Dmitry Lapa, "Holy Hierarch Birinus, Bishop of Dorchester-on-Thames and Apostle", Православие.Ru English Edition)

17. SAINTS BOTOLPH, ABBOT, AND ADOLPH, BISHOP, OF IKANHOE

Our holy Fathers Botolph and Adolph were born of noble parents early in the seventh century. They were taught the Christian Faith in East Anglia, and in about 633, when both boys were thirteen years old, their religious education began at Burgh Castle, a monastery founded by the Irish monk, St. Fursey. However, the pagan King Penda of Mercia, invaded East Anglia, St. Fursey was forced to flee abroad, and the brothers moved to Bosham in Sussex, where they continued their education under another Irish Abbot, Dicul. Then they went across the sea to the monastery of Faremoutier in France, where they received the monastic tonsure and a thorough education in the monastic life.

According to John of Tynemouth, Adolph was then raised to the episcopate in Maastricht in Holland, where he led a holy life in all respects. But in about 654 Botolph returned to England. For through the intercession of two sisters of King Anna of East Anglia, Aethelburga and Saethrytha, who were living in the same French monastery, he was granted a certain uncultivated place called Ikanoe in East Anglia, on which to build a monastery.

"Now that region," writes John of Tynemouth, "was as much forsaken by man as it was possessed by demons, whose fantastic illusion by the coming of the holy man was to be immediately put to flight and the pious conversation of the faithful substituted in its place, so that where up to that time the deceit of the devil had abounded, the grace of our beneficent founder should more abound. Upon the entry therefore of the blessed Botolph, the blackest smoke arises, and the enemy, knowing that his own flight was at hand, cries out with horrid clamour, saying, 'This place which we have inhabited for a long time, we thought to inhabit for ever. Why, O Botolph! most cruel stranger, dost thou violently drive us from these seats? In nothing have we offended thee, in nothing have we disturbed your right. What do you seek in our expulsion? What do you wish to establish in this region of ours? And after being driven out of every corner of the world, do you expel us wretched even out of this solitude?' But the blessed Botolph, having made the sign of the Cross, put all his enemies to flight."

St. Botolph proceeded to build a model community of monks at Ikanoe (present-day Iken in Suffolk), being himself distinguished by many spiritual gifts, including prophecy.

In 670 St. Ceolfrid, the future Abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow, visited him from Ripon, and was impressed by what he saw. He stayed with him for some time, and used what he had learned in the foundation of his monasteries in the north of England.

St. Botolph founded several monasteries in East Anglia, giving his name to the town of Boston “Botolph’s Stone”), and was also invited to take charge of the new monastery at Much Wenlock in Shropshire, where St. Mildburga was the abbess.

At length the saint died after a long illness in June, 680, and many miracles were wrought at his tomb. His brother, St. Adolph, died in the same year.

In 869 St. Botolph's monastery was destroyed by the Danes. However, in about 972, at the command of St. Ethelwold, bishop of Winchester, a band of monks led by a certain Ulfketyl came to the saint's tomb, collected the precious relics, wrapped them in fine linen, and tried to carry them away on their shoulders. However, writes John of Tynemouth, "they were fixed with so great a weight, that by no effort can they move a step. Besides the cloisters of the altar resound with a loud noise, as if to intimate that their work was unfinished. They are stupefied with amazement; but at last by the teachings of God's grace, the monk aforesaid recollects the things he has heard, that the blessed Adolph the Bishop was buried with his brother, and having raised the body out of the earth, they carried it with them to Saint Ethelwold rejoicing."

According to Abbot Folcard of Thorney, who wrote his life in the early 11th century, the reopened tomb gave forth a "miraculous aroma" for fifteen days, and the remains of Botolph could not be removed without those of his brother Adolph.

St. Ethelwold then placed the head of St. Botolph in the monastery of Ely, part of the rest of the body together with the body of St. Adolph in the monastery of Thorney, and the rest in his own monastery at Winchester.

According to one source, the church at Burgh, near Woodbridge, contained his relics for a time, before King Canute ordered their removal to the monastery at Bury St. Edmund’s which he founded in 1020.

Later, St. Edward the Confessor translated part of the body of St. Botolph to St. Peter's, Westminster.

64 ancient churches were dedicated to Botolph, sixteen of them in Norfolk and three in the city of London. He was also widely venerated in Denmark, and was regarded as one of the patron saints of travellers including an association with bridges. The church at Ikanoe structurally dates from the 11th century, but with evidence of an earlier building in close association, and contains part of a large stone cross-shaft which archaeologists believe may have originally been placed on the site of St. Botolph’s monastery in the 10th century, following the removal of his relics by St. Ethelwold in 970.

Saints Botolph and Adolph are commemorated on June 17.

Holy Fathers Botolph and Adolph, pray to God for us!

(Sources: "Saint Botolph of Boston", compiled by Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, in *The True Vine*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1992; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1978, pp. 4, 51-52; Simeon of Durham, *History of the Church of Durham*; Fr. Elias Trefor-Jones, "St. Botwulf (Botolph) of Icanhoe", *Orthodox News*, vol. 18, no. 3, Spring, 2005, p. 4; "St. Botulph's Church, Iken"; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 120-121, 148-149, 281; Kenneth Fields, "St. Botulph – A Benedictine Pioneer", *Catholic Life,* August, 2008, pp. 6-8)

18. SAINT CEDD, BISHOP OF LONDON

Our holy Father Cedd, together with his brothers St. Chad, Cynebil and Caelin, were Anglian boys educated at Lindisfarne by Saints Aidan and Finan. In 653, St. Finan baptized Peada, king of the Middle Angles at the king's village of Wallbottle at Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland. The king returned "full of joy" with four Northumbrian priests, one of whom was Cedd. The others were Diuma, who later became the holy bishop of Mercia and the Middle Angles, Betti and Addi. The apostolic work of these four men was very successful.

However, King Oswy of Northumbria, who became ruler of Mercia after King Peada's death, then decided to send St. Cedd to the kingdom of East Saxons, which had reverted to paganism after the death of King Sebert and the expulsion of St. Mellitus, bishop of London, earlier in the century. And so, with the blessing of St. Finan, Cedd and another priest set off to re-evangelize the land, whose king, Sigebert, had just been baptized. This mission, too, was very successful, and soon St. Finan consecrated Cedd to the episcopate.

As bishop, St. Cedd built churches and ordained priests and deacons in many places. Thus at Bradwell-on-Sea he built a church out of the rubble of a Roman fort which is still standing today. And he built another monastery at Tilbury, where an early Saxon immersion font that may well have been used by the saint still survives. He baptised King Swithelm of the East Saxons at Rendlesham.

The saint often returned to Northumbria to preach, and on one such trip, in 658, he was given land for the foundation of a monastery at Lastingham in Yorkshire by King Aethelwold. This came about through the intercession of Cedd's brother Caelin, and the monastery was built by another of Cedd's brothers, Cynebil. St. Cedd consecrated the monastery after fasting and praying for forty days.

St. Cedd played an important part in the Synod of Whitby in 664, which ended the schism between the Celtic and Roman Churches in England. Although trained in the Celtic Church, he wholeheartedly accepted the Roman-Byzantine Paschalion. He acted as an interpreter between the Celtic and Roman parties.

St. Cedd died of the plague in Lastingham on October 26, 664. On hearing of his death, some thirty monks travelled north from Bradwell-on-Sea to live near his holy relics. At first he was buried outside the monastery, but then his body was placed to the right of the altar in a new stone church dedicated to the Mother of God.

St. Egbert, abbot of Iona, was once discussing the lives of St. Cedd's brother, St. Chad, with his friend, St. Hybald of Hibaldstow, and said:

"I know a man in this island, still in the flesh, who, when that prelate passed out of this world, saw the soul of his brother Cedd, with a company of angels, descending from heaven, who, having taken his soul along with them, returned thither again..."

St. Cedd is commemorated on October 26.

Holy Father Cedd, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, III, 22-26, IV, 3; Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition*, Frithgarth: English Orthodox Trust, 1995, chapter 85; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979, p. 73; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 117-118; Ian Wood, "Lastingham in its Sacred Landscapes", Lastingham Publishing, 2008)

19. SAINT CEOLWULF, KING, AND MONK OF LINDISFARNE

Our holy Father Ceolwulf became king of Northumbria in the year 729. The beginning of his reign, writes Simeon of Durham, "was marked by a continued series of misfortunes", and in 731 he was captured and forcibly tonsured. However, he was released in the same year, "and afterwards, when peace and tranquillity smiled upon him, many of the Northumbrians, both nobles and private individuals, laid aside their arms and having accepted the tonsure, gave the preference to a monastic life over that spent in warlike occupations."

In 737 he abdicated and became a monk at Lindisfarne, endowing that church so generously that the community was henceforth able to drink beer or wine, whereas formerly they used to drink only water or milk. St. Ceolwulf was a very learned man, "imbued with an extraordinary love of the Scriptures". So the Venerable Bede dedicated his famous *History of the English Church and Nation* to him and asked him to correct it.

St. Ceolwulf died in 764 and was buried next to St. Cuthbert - a great mark of honour. In 830 his relics were translated to King Egred's new church at Norham-on-Tweed with those of St. Cuthbert; and later his head was translated to Durham. Miracles testified to his holiness.

St. Ceolwulf is commemorated on January 15.

Holy Father Ceolwulf, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*; Simeon of Durham, *History of the Church of Durham*; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 74; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, p. 342)

20. SAINT CHAD, BISHOP OF LICHFIELD AND MARTYR-PRINCES WULFHAD AND RUFINUS OF MERCIA

Our holy Father Chad was born at the end of the sixth century in Northumberland. He was a disciple of St. Aidan of Lindisfarne. After a period in Ireland spent in asceticism, he was appointed Abbot of Lastingham in Yorkshire in succession to his brother, St. Cedd.

In 664, Bishop Tuda of York died of the plague, and it fell to King Oswy of Northumbria and his son, the Sub-King Alchfrid, to appoint a successor. His choice fell on St. Wilfrid, Abbot of Ripon, who was sent to France to be consecrated to the episcopate. However, since St. Wilfrid was away for a long time, King Oswy sent to Canterbury for the consecration of Chad, "a holy man," as the Venerable Bede writes, "modest in all his ways, learned in the Scriptures, and careful to practise all that he found in them. With Chad the king sent a priest named Eadhaed, who later, during the reign of Egfrid, became Bishop of Ripon. On arriving in Kent, they found that Archbishop Deusdedit had died, and that no successor had been appointed. They therefore went on to the province of the West Saxons, consecrated Chad as bishop [in 666] with the assistance of two bishops of the British, who [kept] Pascha contrary to canonical practice between the fourteenth and twentieth days of the moon. For at that time, Wini [Bishop of the West Saxons] was the only bishop in all Britain who had been canonically consecrated.

"When he became bishop, Chad immediately devoted himself to maintaining the truth and purity of the Church, and set himself to practise humility and continence and to study. After the example of the Apostles, he travelled on foot and not on horseback when he went to preach the Gospel; for he was one of Aidan's disciples and always sought to instruct his people by the same methods as Aidan and his own brother Cedd."

In May, 669 St. Theodore "the Greek" arrived at his see in Canterbury. He told St. Chad that he considered his Episcopal consecration to be uncanonical, to which the saint humbly replied: "If you know that my consecration as bishop was irregular, then I willingly resign the office; for I have never thought myself worthy of it. Although unworthy, I accepted it solely under obedience." Impressed by this reply, St. Theodore assured him that he would not have to give up his office, and himself corrected his consecration.

St. Chad then returned to his monastery in Lastingham.

"The Mercians at this time were ruled by King Wulfhere, who, on the death of [Bishop] Jaruman, asked Theodore to provide him and his people with a bishop. Theodore, however, did not wish to consecrate a new bishop for them, but asked King Oswy to give them Chad as their bishop. Chad was then living quietly in his

monastery at Lastingham, while Wilfrid ruled the bishopric of York, and indeed all the lands of the Northumbrians and Picts to the borders of Oswy's realm. The most reverend Bishop Chad always preferred to undertake his preaching missions on foot rather than on horseback; but Theodore ordered him to ride whenever he undertook a long journey. He was more reluctant to forgo this pious exercise which he loved, but the Archbishop, who recognized his outstanding holiness and considered it more proper for him to ride, himself insisted on helping him to mount his horse. So Chad received the Bishopric of the Mercians and the people of Lindsey, and administered the diocese in great holiness of life after the example of the Early Fathers."

In 669 King Wulfhere gave the estate and manor of Eccleshall, where there had probably been a Romano-British church, to St. Chad as his episcopal centre.

"At this time Wulfhere… had been hailed as Bretwalda of all the Angles and Saxons. He had espoused the beautiful Ermenhilda, a daughter of the royal house of Kent, and descended from the noblest stock of the Franks. Though fair in form and lineage, she was accounted fairer still in faith and sanctity. In due time, she bore to the king four fair children: three sons, Wulfhad, Rufinus and Coenred, and one daughter, the beauteous Werburga. The boys are said to have been adorned with all the princely graces and to have excelled in all the manly exercises suited to their rank. The courtesy of their demeanour, the prudence of their conduct, and the wit of their conversation endeared them to their father's subjects, both rich and poor.

"Their father, King Wulfhere, had been baptized many years before by the holy Bishop Finan of the nation of the Scots; and at the font, and afterwards when he led his bride to the altar, he made a vow to the Lord that he would utterly destroy the temples of the demons, and root out the idols from his realm, and extend, as far as he should be able, the faith of Jesus Christ. But when he inherited the throne of his fathers, he forgot to perform the vow which he had made, and idolatry still lingered in the kingdom of the Mercians. In this wickedness the king was countenanced by one Werbode, whom he had made his chief counsellor and friend, such as Haman the Agagite was to King Artaxerxes. They say that he was an idolater, a man of Belial, a very minister and satellite of Satan; that he was crafty in heart, wily in tongue, wanton in appetite, and arrogant in mind. Not content with the favours which the king had already bestowed upon him, he even dared in his heart to think of wooing the lovely Werburga, well knowing that she was dedicated to Christ, hoping, in his madness, thereby to succeed to the kingdom.

"The king, not heeding, consented to Werbode's suit, but Queen Ermenhilda sharply rebuked him for his presumption and reproached him with his base lineage. And Werburga herself, as befitted a maiden who was soon to take the veil, bade him think no more of her as his bride, but rather to seek for God's forgiveness

for having conceived such a thought in his heart. Her brothers, Wulfhad and Rufinus, in more impetuous mood, threatened him with their sorest vengeance, if ever he should prefer his low-born suit to their sister. The disdainful words of these royal youths rankled in the evil mind of Werbode, and one day cost them dear, albeit, through the teaching of the holy Chad, they were to earn the crown of martyrdom, as this story showeth. For it fell upon a day, as the holy man was engaged in devout prayer and meditation in his cell, that a hart of great size and wide-spreading antlers burst forth from the forest glades into the open space which surrounded the fountain. His panting breath and quivering limbs told that the huntsman was on his track, and to slake his raging thirst, he began to drink eagerly of the cooling waters. Pitying the distress of the noble animal and moved with the bowels of compassion towards all the creatures of God, Chad covered him with the boughs and leaves of trees, to refresh him with their coolness and to conceal him from his foes, for in his inward mind he believed something wonderful would happen by means of the hart. And when the animal was somewhat recovered, it meekly suffered the holy man to put a cord round its neck, and then it wandered into the forest to crop the grass.

"Hardly had the saint recovered from the surprise occasioned by the appearance of the hart, than the blast of a horn fell upon his ear, and soon a handsome youth, in gay apparel, reined in his steed in front of the cell, whither the footprints of the hart had guided him. This was no other than Wulfhad, the king's eldest son, who had been following the chase - to which, as became one of royal lineage, he was much addicted - and, in the eagerness of his pursuit, had lost sight of his retainers.

"On seeing the holy man, who at the sound of the horse's footsteps had come out of his cell, the prince courteously and reverently saluted him, and enquired whether he had seen the hart of which he had been in quest since the early dawn. To whom the saint replied, 'Am I the keeper of the hart? I do not tend or guard the beasts of the forest, or the cattle of the field, or the birds of the air, but, through the ministry of the hart, have become the guide of thy salvation. For God, Who prepared the hart, hath made know to thee the hidden things of His own mysteries, that thou mayest believe in His name, and be baptized for the remission of sins. By a beautiful foreshadowing, nay, by the witness of a sure prophecy, the hart bathed in the fountain sets forth and shows to thee beforehand the laver of wholesome Baptism, even as thou mayest learn the mind of David from the text, 'As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsted for God, the mighty, the living; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?' (Psalm 41.1-2)

"Many other things also did the Saint set forth, showing him how by the ministry of irrational animals the Divine Wisdom had deigned to reveal His own Mysteries for the salvation of the faithful. By means of a dove, He announced to Noah, after the flood, that the waters which had covered the earth were dried up. By the mouth

of a lowly ass, He restrained the madness of the prophet [i.e. Balaam], and by the ministry of a raven He fed the Prophet Elias. And the Lord Himself, after the custom of the Prophets, when He made His entry into Jerusalem, deigned to ride on an ass and her colt, in token of the conversion of two peoples. Nor did he forget to tell what is read of the Blessed Eustathius, how the Lord vouchsafed to appear to Him in the form of a stag; and many miracles of brute animals which have been accomplished, and which are found written in the acts of the Blessed Martin and Jerome.

"The prince is related to have replied in all courtesy to the words of the holy priest: 'Truly, O reverend father, these testimonies might well be believed, even if they rested on your sanctity alone; but for my part, the things which you tell me would be more likely to work faith in me, if the animal which I have been pursuing which you have hidden by the fountain, and have taught to wander in the forest with a rope round his neck, should appear forthwith in our presence, in answer to your prayers or in obedience to your command.' Immediately the holy priest prostrated himself in prayer. And lo! the above-mentioned hart, bearing the cord upon his neck, burst forth from the forest and stood before them. Then the saint said, rising from his knees, 'Understand now in truth that all things are possible to him that believeth, and if anyone shall ask the Father anything in the Name of the Son, it shall be done unto him. Hear therefore, O my son, and see; incline thine ear to obey the Faith of Christ, to receive the Grace of Baptism, for according to the promise of the Saviour, 'He who believeth and is baptized, shall be saved' (Mark 16.16).

"Comforted and strengthened in the Faith, Wulfhad threw himself at the feet of the man of God, and prayed that he might forthwith be baptized. The Blessed Chad, seeing him thus rooted and grounded in the Faith, returned thanks to God, and as was meet, first began to instruct him in the rudiments of the Faith of Christ. Then, having solemnly blessed the fountain, he baptized him therein in the Name of the Holy Trinity, and became, so to speak, his spiritual father. And since evening was coming on, and day was now fast reclining, the holy father made his son spend the night with him, and setting before him such frugal food as his cell afforded, entertained him with his devout conversation and instruction. At the same time was seen a thing wonderful to behold; for just as the holy Chad abode with the Prince, so the hart stood by the side of his horse, the wild animal with the tame, and slid down beside him in all gentleness and grazed on the green grass. At early dawn, the holy priest celebrated the Holy Eucharist and admitted his youthful disciple to the Body and Blood of the Lord, as a true and living member of His Church.

"Wulfhad, being now entered upon the way of truth, was troubled for the salvation of his brother Rufinus, and earnestly besought Saint Chad that he would pray to God to incline his heart to embrace the Christian Faith. To whom the Saint

is related, in sterner mood, to have replied, 'Why do you ask for that to be done by me, who am of little esteem, when you can obtain this from God in a moment? For your faith shall bring about your salvation, and within the space of three days shall bring him to a knowledge of the truth; for He Who separated you from your mother's womb will call you both by His Grace to Himself; He will justify you in Himself, He will glorify you from Himself.' Upon this, Wulfhad bade farewell to the man of God and saluted him with a holy kiss, and when he had asked and received his blessing, departed to his own home strong in the Faith.

"On drawing near to his father's house, he met his brother Rufinus, who rejoiced greatly to see him, thinking that some evil had befallen him; to whom he related all that had taken place in the forest with the man of God, and earnestly exhorted him to do the same. Rufinus heard these things gladly, declaring that he had long thought about coming to the Faith of Christ, concerning whom he had first heard the words of life from Saint Germanus, Bishop of the East Saxons. For that holy bishop had come to those parts with the saintly Ermenhilda, and living there a long time, had preached the Gospel unto many.

"The two princes thereupon resolved to visit once more the man of God, and that they might carry out their design more prudently, set out early in the morning, leaving the usual track in order to conceal their purpose from the thanes who rode with them. They had not gone far into the forest when lo! the hart which had first appeared to Saint Wulfhad, having his neck still covered with the cord, showed himself to them, and led the way to the dwelling of the man of God. Rufinus followed him in his flight by his footprints, but Wulfhad, knowing what these acts of the dumb animal meant, tried to bring him back with the blast of his horn, fearing lest the animal should unwittingly be killed. But the other, not hearing or understanding, urged on the chase, and arrived first at the cell of the man of God. And then the hart, as before, plunged into the fountain, with the purpose of leading the youth to understand that he would lead him to the laver of life-giving Baptism. It was said that the most holy Chad himself produced that very fountain from the bosom of the earth by his prayers, which even to this day is called 'Chad's Well', and possesses the power of healing those who are afflicted with various diseases.

"The man of God, knowing in his mind what was taking place, went out of his cell into the open air, and with eyes and hands lifted to heaven, poured forth his earnest prayers for the salvation of the Prince. While the bishop was devoutly engaged in this way, Rufinus drew near, and at the first glance was immediately persuaded in his mind that it was none other than the blessed Chad, of whom he had heard Germanus say so many and such great things. 'Art you,' he said, 'my lord, Father Chad, beloved of God and men, once the friend of Anna, the most Christian king of the East Saxons, the teacher and guide to salvation of my brother Wulfhad?' 'I am,' he replied. Then Rufinus threw himself at his feet, beseeching him most earnestly to admit him, without delay, to Holy Baptism. The good

bishop, admiring and loving him in his heart, rejoiced greatly that such devotion glowed in the breast of a youth, although he seemed to possess the wisdom of old age.

"And when Wulfhad presently rode up to them, his face beamed with joy, as he praised the godly desire of his brother to receive Holy Baptism. Then the holy Chad, with exultant tongue, instructed him as was fitting, and afterwards baptized him in the same fountain, Wulfhad holding him in the manner taught by the Holy Church. After this, the priest celebrated the Mystery of the Eucharist, and these newly made lambs of Christ's flock, ascending, as it were, from the font, he sanctified with the holy washing of the Immaculate Lamb, perceiving from many signs that they would go up to Mount Gilead, that is, to the glory of martyrdom. Nor did the holy man forget to instruct them to keep the commandments of God or to set forth to them the precepts of the Divine discipline, for well he knew they would cleanse their way by paying heed to it, according to God's law.

"The newly converted Princes, on parting from the presence of the holy bishop, to return to their own home, earnestly besought him that he would deign to take up his abode nearer to the castle of their father, at Wulpherchester, that they might the more easily profit from his holy counsel and instruction. Their request was pleasing in the eyes of the bishop, and he accordingly moved his cell nearer to the place they desire. They themselves went daily to the man of God, to assist him in his sacred duties, and often lingered in the hallowed precincts, and concealed, under the pretence of hunting, the profession of the Christian Faith which they had embraced.

"But the evil heart of Werbode, their father's friend and counsellor, was full of enmity against the youths, because they had withstood him in his suit to their sister Werburga. And so he stealthily spied out all their ways and doings, and watched for every opportunity to inflame their father's mind with anger against them. And when he found out for certain that they had become Christians, and were accustomed to frequent the chapel for Divine worship and to visit the man of God, he made it his business to inform the king thereof, and by setting before him that the spread of the Faith in his realm would overthrow the religion of his forefathers, under which Penda, his royal father, had been so prosperous and had gained so many victories; and that, moreover, his two sons, in embracing this Faith, were setting at nought his royal authority, he roused the king to such a pitch of fury that he swore a frightful oath that he would be revenged upon them.

"Accordingly, at the crack of dawn on the following day, when the darkness was still upon the earth, the king, having girded himself with his sword, set out with this child of the devil towards the place where the man of God dwelt. But knowing full well that he would be unable to restrain the fierceness of his anger, he told Werbode to go in advance to herald his approach to his sons, that if he happened

to find them in the chapel, they might at least be so filled with fear as to flee and hide themselves. But this son of darkness had not thought of sparing the hapless youths. Approaching the chapel with stealthy steps, he looked in at the window and saw them prostrate on the ground, earnestly engaged in prayer. And then, without making a sound or uttering a word, he returned secretly to the king, and informed him that his sons continued obstinate in their purpose of worshipping Christ, and that so far from displaying any fear or showing any respect to his royal authority, they reviled him as a blasphemer and an apostate.

"At these lying words of Werbode, the king turned pale with wrath, and burning with the unnatural desire to shed the blood of his sons, he advanced with rapid strides to the precincts of the chapel. The saintly youths, on hearing the thunder of the king's voice, were anxious for the safety of their spiritual father, fearing lest in his wrath he should lay violent hands on the most holy Chad himself, the anointed of the Lord. For well they knew that for themselves their father would have nothing but stripes and reproaches. Nevertheless, they were eager and prepared in heart to suffer revilings and terrors and various kinds of death for the Name of Jesus. But the blessed Chad, knowing that as is the roaring of a lion, so is the wrath of a king, at the earnest entreaties of the young Princes, fled from the face of Wulfhere and hid himself in the remoter parts of the forest. And this he did, not that he in any way feared death, which he counted rather as gain, but he foresaw that worthier fruit would issue to many from the life which had been spared, than if he were to rush upon instant death.

"King Wulfhere, if indeed he could be called a king who was neither willing nor able to govern himself, bursting furiously into the chapel, found his sons before the image of the Saviour, earnestly engaged in prayer. Thereupon he began to heap upon them all manner of reproaches because they had broken the laws of his realm, and set at nought his authority. And then he fiercely threatened them with his direct vengeance if they did not immediately renounce the Faith of Christ and worship the gods of their fathers. Then Wulfhad, with all Christian meekness and princely dignity, replied that they were most unwilling to break the laws of the land, but that the king had himself once professed the faith which now he renounced; that they earnestly desired to retain his fatherly affection, but that the prospect of no tortures or death could shake their fixed resolve to continue steadfast in the Faith of Christ.

"But even while the brave young Prince was yet speaking, the king, fiercer than any wild beast, drawing his sword, rushed furiously upon him, and killed him, and cut off his head, and consecrated him, albeit unwittingly, as a martyr to Christ. The younger Rufinus, seeing these things, fled, but being pursued by his father, became as fellow martyr with his brother and departed to celestial glory. And so it came to pass that those whom nature made one on earth, being united in faith and love, were made one also in heaven.

"When this terrible crime had been accomplished, the king and Werbode turned away with hurried steps from the place which was conscious of his crime. But lest the terrible deed should come to the knowledge of the queen or of the people, they agreed to destroy the chapel of the man of God during the darkness of the night and to bury the bodies of the slaughtered princes in some secret place. But their evil deeds could not remain long undiscovered. The avenger was at hand. For when the king returned with his wicked counsellor to the castle and had gone alone to his bedchamber, an evil spirit, at the very entrance of the royal palace, in the sight of many persons standing by, took the schemer of the death of the martyred princes as his own vassal. For he immediately began to tear his hands and arms with his teeth, and, shouting in an unrestrained voice, proclaimed to all men what, at his own wicked instigation, the blood-stained father had done to his son. For a long time the avenging demon did not cease to torment him, until at last he forced him to breathe forth his wicked spirit.

"The report of the terrible crime filled all men with sorrow and amazement, and when it reached the queen's ears, a sword of unspeakable grief pierced her soul. Going to the place of her sons' martyrdom, she took up their bodies and gave them honourable burial in one stone tomb. From that time, she resolved to leave the bed of her husband, and with her daughter Werburga, who had been the unwitting cause of her brothers' deaths, finally retired to the monastery of Sheppey."

"Saint Sexburga and Saint Ermenhilda received the sacred monastic habit in the minster which is called Middleton or Milton in Kent, and the island of Sheppey is a dependency of Milton, and is three miles wide and seven miles long. It then please the holy Queen Sexburga to build for herself a minster within it. She had then held the kingdom for thirty years to deliver it to her son Hlothere. And she bought from him his share of the Sheppey district to be free for the use of the minster so long as Christianity should be maintained in England, and she obtained from Rome a blessing for those who for the service of God would undertake this charge. Saint Ermenhilda rests with her mother and with her mother's sister, Saint Etheldritha, at Ely, and there their miracles are often known.

"Meanwhile, the king, overwhelmed with unavailing remorse, took to his bed, and seemed likely to die. To assuage the intolerable anguish of his mind, his friends counselled him to seek solace in hunting or in falconry, or in instruments of music. But the queen and her relatives admonished him, above all, not to despair of Divine mercy, but rather to take counsel from the holy Bishops Jarman and Chad, and to do what in their judgement would be right. The king yielded to this wiser counsel and firmly resolved to go to the holy Chad and do whatsoever he commanded. Accordingly, one morning he set out with his thanes, as if to follow the chase, hoping to meet the man of God by a chance similar to that which had befallen his sons, now, alas, martyrs. For the Blessed Chad, immediately after the murder of

the saintly youths, had returned to his former dwelling-place, by the fountain, and was leading there the life of a hermit, without a single companion to relieve the dreariness of his solitude.

"When the king had reached the thicker parts of the forest, and all his attendants, by God's will, were scattered hither and thither, and he was left alone, he saw the meek hart, so often mentioned, bounding in the distance, and having the cord around his neck as before. At this sight, being filled with joy, he followed in his track, until he came to the dwelling of the servant of God, the holy Chad. The hart, as though he had finished his task, then left the king, and plunged into the fountain, as was his custom, to cool and refresh himself. The king immediately dismounted from his horse, and approaching the window of the chapel, saw the man of God clothed in his priestly vestments standing before the altar, celebrating the Eucharist. Being led by a guilty conscience, he stood within the porch, and did not dare to enter, until he had first been absolved of his sins by the holy bishop.

"And when the bishop began the anaphora, so great a light shone forth from heaven through the apertures in the wall that priest and sacrifice and all that appertained thereto were covered with the splendour that was shed upon them. The eyes of the king were blinded by the brightness of the Light, for in comparison with this heavenly radiance the noonday sun itself seemed poor and mean. And marvellous to relate, the splendour in no way waxed dim until the celebration of the Holy Eucharist was accomplished; then the Light depart toward heaven, and the natural sun, entering in at the windows and doors, darted his rays even to the altar.

“The holy man knew that the king was standing outside, and what it was that he desired in his mind; for the heavenly Light shone upon him spiritually as well as corporeally. And when the Sacred Office was finished, he hastily took off his priestly vestments, and, unwittingly thinking to lay them in the place appointed for them by the side of the altar, unwittingly hung them on a sunbeam, and went to the king, who was outside the porch. But the sunbeam upheld the sacred robes that had been laid upon it, so that they did not fall to the ground, showing by a manifest miracle, as the chronicler says, that this son of light clove firmly to the Sun of Righteousness in faith and love.

"The saint, on going forth, found the king prostrate upon the earth before the porch of the church, overwhelmed with confusion on account of his sin and oppressed with intolerable anguish of mind. The bishop raised him up and, after the example of the Good Samaritan, poured into the wounds of his mind the oil of consolation mingled with the wine of sharp reproof, lest he should fall into the sin of despair. 'Often,' he said, 'since that evil day, have I implored the Creator of all things that he would vouchsafe to take the sin which you have committed against your son at the instigation of the minister of death, who has already become an

inhabitant of hell. And the Lord, that He might show you the riches of His goodness, has granted you the opportunity of repentance, in answer to my prayers, if you are willing to follow my counsels.'

"The king replied with great humility that he was willing in all things to be guided by his advice, and in accordance therewith, to make amends for the evil deed that he had done. Therefore Saint Chad enjoined upon him, under the seal of penance, that he should with all speed utter a public decree that all the shrines of the demons should be utterly destroyed throughout the realm of the Mercians, and that he should give command to root out idolatry, build churches, found monasteries, ordain clergy and strictly observe the ordinances of the Christian Faith. He further admonished him that he should do justice between man and man, devote himself to frequent prayers, make amends for his sins through deeds of mercy according to the exhortation of Holy Scripture, refrain from all corrupt actions and be faithful to his marriage bed.

"When the man of God had spoken these and similar things, he turned a little to one side and gave himself to prayer, and motioned to the now penitent king that he also should seek the face of the Lord. And Wulfhere, chancing to lift up his eyes, saw the priestly vestments hanging upon the sunbeam, not without great wonder. Whereupon he rose from his knees and came closer, that he might see this great vision, and placed his own gloves on the beam - but they immediately fell to the ground. Being now a man of deeper insight, he understood that Saint Chad was accounted the fellow and companion of the Saints above and beloved by the Sun of Righteousness, to Whom while living on earth the sun paid such homage. When after a little while the holy bishop stopped praying, the king bade him behold the wonderful sight he had seen. Then the bishop, drawing near, took up his vestment, and, laying them on the altar, devoutly thanked and worshipped God, Who enlightens very man that comes into the world.

"The king, edified and rejoicing in the Lord, took the holy bishop with him and returned to his home and relatives. In short, he laboured diligently to accomplish what he had openly vowed to God in the presence of His servant. On the advice of the Blessed Chad, and with the help of the saintly Ermenhilda, within a short space of time the king utterly purged his realm from the contamination of idolatry; and whatever could be thought contrary to wholesome faith, he made it his care to remove. He built or caused to be built churches in suitable places; he erected many beautiful monasteries for both sexes and enriched them with ample revenues; he endowed with many lands and possessions the noble monastery of Peterborough, which he is said to have founded to expiate the crime committed against his sons& The church dedicated in this place in honour of the chief of the apostles contains the ashes of many saints, and still sends forth many good men to the holy fellowship of the citizens above.

"Chad established his episcopal see in the town of Lichfield [i.e. 'field of the dead', so called because one thousand Christians, including the Priest Amphibalus, were martyred there during the Roman persecutions], where he also died and was buried, and where the succeeding bishops of the province have their see to this day. There he built himself a house near the church, where he used to retire privately with seven or eight brethren in order to pray or study whenever his work and preaching permitted. When he had ruled the Church of the province with great success for two and a half years, Divine Providence ordained a time such as is spoken of in Ecclesiastes: 'There is a time to cast away stones, and time to gather stones together'. For heaven sent a plague which, bringing bodily death, bore away the living stones of the Church from their earthly stations to the Temple in heaven. And when death had freed many members of the revered Bishop's Church from the burden of the flesh, the hour drew near when Chad himself was to pass out of this world to the Lord.

"One day, he was alone in his house with a brother whose name was Owini, his other companions having had occasion to return to the church. This Owini was a monk of great merit, who had renounced the world with the pure intention of winning a heavenly reward, so that he was altogether a fit person to receive a revelation of God's secrets, and one whose word everyone could trust. He had accompanied Queen Etheldritha from the province of the East Angles and had been her chief thane and steward of her household. Growing in devotion to the faith, he decided to renounce the world, which he did in no half-hearted fashion; for he rid himself so completely of worldly ties that he abandoned all his possessions, put on a simple garment, and carrying in his hand an axe and an adze, set off for the reverend Father Chad's monastery at Lastingham. This he did to show that he was entering the monastery, not for the sake of an idle life, as some do, but in order to work, and he demonstrated this in practice; for since he found himself less able to meditate on the Scriptures with profit, he undertook a larger amount of manual labour. In short, recognizing his reverence and devotion, the bishop admitted him to his house among the brethren; and whenever they were engaged in study, he used to busy himself in essential tasks out of doors.

"One day, when Oswini was working outside and the other brethren had departed to the church, the bishop was reading and praying alone in his chapel. Suddenly, as he afterwards used to relate, he heard the sound of sweet and joyful singing coming down from heaven to earth. The wound seemed at first to emanate from the southeast, gradually coming closer to him until it centred over the roof of the chapel where the bishop was at prayer. It then entered the chapel and seemed to fill both it and the surrounding air. He listened with rapt attention to what he heard, and after about half an hour, he heard the sounds of joy rise from the roof of the chapel, and return to heaven as it had come, with inexpressible sweetness. Owini stood astonished for a while, turning over in his mind what this might portend, when the bishop threw open the chapel window, and clapping his hands,

as he often used to do when someone was outside, summoned him indoors.

"When he hurried in, the bishop said, 'Go at once to the church, and fetch those seven brethren here, and come back with them yourself.' On their arrival, he first urged them to live in love and peace with each other and with all the faithful, and to be constant and tireless in keeping the rules of monastic discipline that he had taught them and that they knew him to observe, and those that they had learned from the lives and teachings of former abbots. He then announced that his own death was drawing near, saying, 'The welcome guest who has visited many of our brethren had come to me today, and has deigned to summon me out of this world. Therefore, return to the church and ask the brethren to commend my passing to our Lord in their prayers. And let each prepare for his own passing by vigils, prayers, and good deeds; for no man knows the hour of his death.'

"Having said this and much besides, he gave them his blessing, and they left him sadly; but the brother who had heard the heavenly music came back alone and flung himself to the ground, saying, 'Father, I beg you to let me ask you a question.' 'Ask what you will,' Chad replied. 'Tell, I pray,' he asked, 'What was the glad song that I heard of singers coming down from heaven upon this chapel and later returning to heaven?' 'Since you heard the singing and were aware of the coming of the heavenly company,' Chad answered, 'I command you in the Name of our Lord not to tell anyone of this before my death. The truth is that they were angelic spirits, who came to summon me to the heavenly reward that I have always longed and hoped for, and they promised to return in seven days' time and take me with them.' All took place as he had said. For Chad was quickly attacked by a disease which steadily grew worse until the seventh day. Then he prepared for death by receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord, his holy soul was released from the prison house of the body and, one may rightly believe, was taken by the angels to the joys of heaven. Nor is it strange that he regarded death with joy as the Day of the Lord; for he had always been careful to prepare for His coming.

“In addition to Chad's many virtues of continence, humility, right preaching, prayer, voluntary poverty, and many others, he was so filled with the fear of God and so mindful of his last end in all that he did, that I [Bede] was told by one of his monks named Trumbert - who was one of my tutors in the Scriptures and had been trained in the monastery under Chad's direction - that if a gale arose while he was reading or doing anything else, ne would close his book and prostrate himself on the ground, praying even more earnestly. But if there was a violent storm of wind and rain, or thunder and lightning startled earth and air, he would go to the church and devote all his thoughts to prayers and psalms continuously until the tempest had passed. When his monks asked him why he did this, Chad replied, 'Have you not read: "The Lord thundered in the heavens, and the Most High have forth His voice. He sent out His arrows and scattered them; He shot out lightnings and discomfited them"? For God stirs the air and raises the winds;

He makes the lightning flash and thunders out of heaven, to move the inhabitants of the earth to fear Him and to remind them of the judgement to come. He shatters their conceit and subdues their presumption by recalling to their minds that awesome day when heaven and earth will flame as He comes in the clouds with great power and majesty to judge the living and the dead. Therefore, we should respond to His heavenly warnings with the fear and love we owe Him,' said Chad. 'And whenever He raises His hand to the trembling air as if to strike, yet spares us still, we should hasten to implore His mercy, examining our inmost hearts, and purging the vileness of our sins, watching over our lives, lest we incur His displeasure.'

"This brother's account of the bishop's death is supported by the evidence of the most reverend Father Egbert, who lived the monastic life in Ireland with Chad when they were both youths, constantly occupied in prayer. But when Chad returned to his own country, Egbert remained an exile for God's sake until the end of his life. A long time afterwards, Hybald, a very holy and austere man who was an abbot in the province of Lindsey, came from Britain to visit him. And while they were discussing the lives of the early Fathers, and delighting to imitate them as was fitting in holy men, the name of the most holy Bishop Chad was mentioned. Whereupon Egbert said, 'I know a man still living in this island, who, when the bishop died, saw the soul of his brother Cedd descend from heaven accompanied by angels, and carry away his soul to the Heavenly Kingdom.' Whether he was speaking of himself or another is uncertain; but the truth of a statement by so great a man cannot be doubted.

"Chad died on the second of March [in the year 672], and was first buried close by Saint Mary's church; but when a church of the most blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, was built there later, his body was transferred to it [by Bishop Hedda]. In both these places, frequent miracles of healing attested to his virtues. More recently, a madman wandering at large arrived there one evening, and passed the night church unnoticed and unheeded by the watchmen. And in the morning, to the amazement and delight of all, he left the place in his right mind, showing clearly what healing he had been granted there by the goodness of God. Chad's burial place is covered by a wooden tomb in the form of a little house with an aperture in the wall through which those who visit it, out of devotion, may insert their hand and take out some of the dust. They mix this in water and give it to sick men or beasts to drink, by which means their ailment is quickly relieved, and they are restored to the longed-for joys of health."

Helen Harwood writes: “During the winter of 873-4 the shrine was destroyed by Viking invaders and later the pieces were buried in the Anglo-Saxon St. Peter’s cathedral where they lay hidden for over 1100 years.

“Archaeologists in 2003 were excavating in the nave of Lichfield Cathedral

where they found the remains of the two previous churches and the 'Lichfield Angel' – three adjoining fragments of an Anglo-Saxon sculptured panel – a carving of the Angel Gabriel made of shelly limestone believed to be part of Chad's shrine.

"Until the Reformation, St. Chad's relics lay in Lichfield Cathedral where his shrine was a place of pilgrimage. Fortunately, although the marble shrine was destroyed the relics were rescued and removed from the cathedral by Prebendary Arthur Dudley and kept hidden by the Hodgetts family of Sedgley. Supposed lost, they were rediscovered in about 1840 by Fr. Benjamin Hulme in a box under the altar in the chapel at Aston-by-Stone. The relics are now in St. Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham. An eighth century illuminated Gospel Book, *The Gospels of Saint Chad,* is in Lichfield Cathedral library. Also the eleventh-century shrine list recorded that the relics of Cedd and Hedda were at Lichfield."

The Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of Saint Chad of Lichfield on March 2, and Saints Wulfad and Rufinus of Mercia - on July 24.

The relics of St. Chad are enshrined above the high altar in the Roman Catholic cathedral in Birmingham.

O Holy Father Chad, and Holy Prince-Martyrs Wulfhad and Rufinus, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *A History of the English Church and People;* Middle Anglian Homily on St. Chad's Day (9th century); *The Martyrdom of SS. Wulfhade and Rufine,* Latin version in R. Hyett Warner, *The Life and Legends of St. Chad,* Leach & Sons, 1871; Old English manuscript (Lambeth 417) (10th century); Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 309-311, 319-320; Helen Harwood, "Eccleshall Castle & St. Chad", *Catholic Life,* April, 2008, p. 14)

21. SAINT CLYDOG, MARTYR-PRINCE OF HEREFORDSHIRE

St. Clydog (or Clodock or Clitaucus) was the son of Clewyn, Prince of Ewyas (Monmouth-Hereford), and grandson of Brychan, Prince of Brecon in South Wales. He ruled in Ewyas. His brother was Dedyw; and both brothers, under the influence of a saintly cousin, Cadoc, did much missionary work in their particular areas. According to *The Book of Llandaff*, a nobleman's daughter fell in love with St. Clydog and said that she would marry no-one but him. This aroused the jealousy of a companion of the Saint, and he was killed by the sword while hunting. His body was placed in a cart and driven to a ford in the river Monnow, but the yoke broke, the oxen refused to go further, and the prince was buried on the spot at a place called Clodock or Merthir Clitauc (Hereford and Worcester), where a church was built (its Protestant successor still stands). Whytford says that St. Clydog was a man of "straight justice, a lover of peace and pure chastity", and that miracles were performed at his death and after his burial. He died in the sixth century.

St. Clydog is commemorated on November 3.

Holy Father Clydog, pray to God for us!

(Sources: A local pamphlet; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 85; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, p. 269)

22. SAINT CONGAR, BISHOP OF CONGRESBURY

Our holy Father Congar is believed to have been the grandson of Geraint, King of Dumnonia (South-West England), who was killed at the battle of Llongborth in about 522, fighting alongside the famous King Arthur. He probably came from Llanwngar, near St. David's in Wales.

Coming through the revelation of an angel to what is now Congresbury in Somerset, the saint, as we read in his 12th-century *Life*, "continued for a long time in this place, which pleased him well, wearing a cilicium (under-garment of goat's hair), living a blameless life, fasting and praying continually. Every morning he plunged himself in cold water, staying in it till he had said the Lord's Prayer three times, after which he returned to the church and remained there in vigil and prayer addressed to the Creator of all things. But at the ninth hour he took some barley bread, though he never had a full meal. His body became emaciated, and to see him you would think him fever-stricken. Most dear to him was the eremitical life, after the example of Paul, the first hermit, and St. Anthony."

St. Congar drained the marshy land in the district and in about 530 founded a monastery. One day, while he was standing in the churchyard surrounded by his monks, "he wished that a yew-tree might grow there, to provide shade from the summer heat, and, with its spreading branches, to ornament the churchyard. As he formed the wish, he fixed in the ground the staff he was holding in his hands, which was made of yew. He let go of it, and, when he put his hand on it again, he could not pluck it out. Next day it began, in the sight of a crowd of bystanders, to bear leaves, and afterwards grew into a huge spreading tree..."

Great numbers came to visit the saint, and the monastery became a flourishing centre. However, the saint sought solitude, and, leaving his weeping flock, he returned to his native Wales, where on the instructions of an angel and with the help of the local king he established himself on a mountain in Glamorgan. Some modern authors have speculated that this retreat across the Severn may have been necessitated by the defeat of the Christian Britons by the pagan Saxons at the battle of Dyrham, which took place not far from Congresbury in 577.

Late in life, St. Congar his nephew, St. Cybi. Together they left South Wales and went to the monastery of St. Enda on the isle of Aran, off the west coast of Ireland. Congar was then so old that he was unable to eat solid food, so his nephew bought a cow for him so that he could have milk for his food. Later they moved again to the peninsula of Lleyn in North Wales, and then to the island of Anglesey, where St. Cybi's cell at Caer Gybi can still be seen. Llanungar, near St. David's, may also be named after him.

According to the 12th-century *Life*, St. Congar then made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where he died. According to Breton tradition, however, he died on his

way back to Britain, at Morbihan in Brittany. What is undisputed is that his body rested, at least until the 14th century, at Congresbury.

St. Congar is commemorated in Wales on November 7, in Somerset - on November 27, and in Brittany on May 12.

Holy Father Congar, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Gilbert H. Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, Oxford: Holywell Press, 1970, part V, pp. 3-29; Baring-Gould, *Lives of the British Saints*, vol. II, pp. 248-253; H.M Porter, *The Celtic Church in Somerset*, Bath: Morgan Books, 1971, pp. 35-39; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 90; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 236-237)

23. SAINT CONSTANTINE, KING, AND MONK-MARTYR OF CORNWALL

Our holy Father Constantine was, according to one tradition, the nephew of the famous King Arthur, to whom the latter bequeathed his crown when he was mortally wounded. According to another, he was a king of Cornwall who abandoned his kingdom after being converted to the Faith by St. Petroc. The story is that the king was out hunting, but the saint intervened to save the stag. The king then became a monk in St. Petroc's cell. Then, leaving for another land, he built a monastery there.

The fullest traditions concerning him come from Scotland. They state that he was the son of Paternus, king of Cornwall, and married the daughter of the king of Brittany. But she died, and he, grieving over her death and refusing to be comforted, delivered his kingdom to his son, and bidding farewell to all, left his kingdom and crossed over to Ireland. Coming to a certain monastery, for seven years he worked humbly carrying grain to and from the monastery mill.

One day he was sitting in the mill and said to himself; "Am I Constantine, king of Cornwall, whose head has so often worn the helmet and his body the breastplate? No, I am not." A man who was hiding in the mill overheard this and reported it to the abbot. He then took him away from the mill, educated him, and raised him to the priesthood. Soon after this, he left the monastery and went to St. Columba; and afterwards he was sent by St. Kentigern, the bishop of Glasgow, to preach the word of God in Galloway, in South-West Scotland. There he was elected abbot of a monastery, where he lived a holy life until old age.

According to another tradition, he founded a monastery at Govan near Glasgow on the Clyde.

In his extreme old age, St. Constantine prayed God to give him a martyr's death, and he heard a voice from heaven saying that it should be as he had asked. Then he went preaching the word of God throughout the land, and came eventually to the island of Kintyre. There some evil men followed him, and, coming up to his attendant, they cut off his hand. The saint immediately healed him with a touch. Then the evil men showered blows upon the saint, cut off his arm, and left him for dead. Calling the brethren to him, the saint comforted them with spiritual words. Then he fell asleep in their presence.

St. Constantine was martyred, according to the Scottish tradition, in 576, and according to the Irish tradition in 588. His shrine tomb is to be found at Govan Old Church. The sarcophagus dates from the 10th or 11th century and contains a depiction of a hunting scene that may refer to the story of his conversion by St. Petroc.

St. Constantine is commemorated on March 9 in Wales and Cornwall, on March 11 in Scotland and on March 18 in Ireland.

Holy Monk-Martyr Constantine, pray to God for us!

(Sources: G.H. Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall,* Truro, vol. 2, 1962, pp. 15-24, vol. 4, 1985, pp. 153, 158; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 91; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 160-161, 499-500)

24. SAINT CREDAN, ABBOT OF EVESHAM

Our holy Father Credan was abbot of Evesham in the second half of the eighth century. Almost nothing is known about his life. According to one 17th century source, he accidentally killed his father and spent the rest of his life in penance as a simple swineherd, before acquiring the reputation of a saint. He died around 780. His relics were subjected to ordeal by fire by unbelieving Normans in 1077, but emerged unscathed. In the translation that followed; they were observed to shine like gold.

St. Credan is commemorated on August 19.

Holy Father Credan, pray to God for us!

(Sources: David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*; Macray, *Chronicon Abbatiae de Evesham*, Rolls series, 1863, pp. 323-324; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 194, 323)

25. SAINT CUTHBURGA, ABBESS OF WIMBORNE

Our holy Mother Cuthburga was the sister of King Ina of Wessex, a great king who in about 726 went to Rome with his wife Ethelburga, ending his days as a monk. Cuthburga was given in marriage to King Aldfrith of Northumbria in about 688. There are different accounts of this marriage. Some say that it was short and was never consummated; others – that it was long and produced a son, who was about eight years old when his father died. In any case, with the approval of her husband, Cuthburga retired from the world and went first to the monastery of Barking, near London, which was ruled at that time by St. Hildelitha. In 705 King Aldfrith died, whereupon Cuthburga journeyed back to her native Wessex and asked her brother, King Ina, for some land on which to found a monastery. In the year 713 she founded the monastery of Wimborne. She was reported to have been a beautiful woman, kind to others but severe to herself and assiduous in fasting and prayer. She reposed in about 725 and was buried in the church at Wimborne, where her coffin, carved out of a single block of oak, can still be seen.

The monastery founded by St. Cuthburga produced several famous female missionary saints who worked on the German mission-field, including Saints **Thecla, Gunthildis, Leoba** and **Agatha.**

St. Cuthburga is commemorated on August 31.

Holy Mother Cuthburga, pray to God for us!

(Sources: William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*; Margaret Gallyon, *The Early Church in Wessex and Mercia*, Lavenham: Terence Dalton, 1980, ch. 4; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford; The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 96; Christine Oliver, *The Saxon Saints of Wimborne*, Wimborne; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifetstyle Press, 2011, p. 221)

26. SAINT CUTHMANN, HERMIT OF STEYNING

Our holy Father Cuthmann was born in about 680 either in Dorset or at Chidham near Chichester in Sussex. The South Saxons were the last Anglo-Saxon tribe to be converted from idolatry to the True Faith; and it may be that Cuthmann was one of the first babies to be baptized by the Apostle of the South Saxons, St. Wilfrid. Cuthmann early showed signs of holiness: when pasturing his father's sheep, he made a circle round them and forbade them in the name of Christ to step out of it while he said his prayers on a stone; and the beasts obeyed his word. After his departure it was said that many miracles and healings took place among those who touched this stone.

When his father died Cuthmann decided to take his invalid mother to find a new home in the east. He constructed a kind of wooden bed for her and with the aid of a rope slung over his shoulders wheeled her round with him wherever he went. At one point the rope broke. This caused amusement to some mowers in a nearby field but their laughter was soon dispelled by a heavy shower of rain which ruined their harvesting! Having replaced the rope with strands from the hedgerow, Cuthmann continued on his journey until his rope snapped again. He was so relieved that his mother sustained no injury that he decided to build a church at the place, which he learned was called Steyning - a Saxon word meaning "The People of the Stone".

Cuthmann found some helpers in his church building, but one day they were in difficulty when a main beam swung out of place threatening to destroy the structure. A traveller appeared and devised a remedy which proved effective. Cuthmann thanked the stranger and asked him who he was. He replied: "I am he in whose name you are building this church."

Not all the local people received the saint with kindness. When his oxen strayed, a local woman called Fippa impounded them and refused to return them to Cuthmann. So he took her two sons and yoked them to his cart in place of the oxen. Fippa came to curse Cuthmann, but he returned her curse and she was raised to the sky by a great gust of wind. As she fell the earth opened up and swallowed her.

In the middle of the eleventh century Cuthmann's wooden church was demolished and a cell of monks built in its place. After the Norman Conquest of 1066 the relics of the saint were removed to the Norman abbey of Fécamp.

St. Cuthmann is commemorated on February 8.

Holy Father Cuthmann, pray to God for us!

(Sources: "Vita S. Cuthmanni" in Codicis Gothani Appendix, *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. LVIII, 1940, pp. 197-98; George Cockman, *Cuthman, Steyning and the Stone*, 1983; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 96-97; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 96-97)

27. SAINTS CYNEBURGA AND CYNESWITHA, ABBESSES, AND TIBBA, NUN, OF MERCIA

Saints Cyneswitha and Cyneburga were daughters of the pagan King Penda of Mercia. According to one source, St. Cyneburga married Alcfrith (Alfrid), son of King Oswy of Northumbria, and then became the foundress and abbess of the monastery of Castor, Northamptonshire. After having gathered a large community of nuns and lived a holy life, Cyneburga died in about 680 and was succeeded as abbess by her younger sister Cyneswitha. King Offa of East Anglia fell in love with St. Cyneswitha, and together with her brothers put pressure on her to marry him. However, Cyneswitha, strengthened by a vision of the Mother of God, rejected his advances. Then Offa was persuaded to go to change his plans and go to Rome with King Kenred of Mercia and St. Egwin of Worcester, where he received the monastic tonsure.

St. Tibba was a hermitess at Ryhall in Leicestershire, which is only about ten miles from Castor, and may have been related to SS. Cyneburga and Cyneswitha. She appeared in a vision to a certain holy man, saying: "I have come down from a festivity on high to announce to you the day of my translation. For this is the night and day of the blessed Lucy, in which I have surrendered my soul to the Lord Jesus Christ."

In 963 the relics of Saints Cyneburga and Cyneswitha were translated to Peterborough by Abbot of Aelfsige of Peterborough. At about the same time the relics of St. Tibba were also transferred from Ryhall to Peterborough; for, as Hugh Candidus wrote in the twelfth century, "she bade him [Abbot Aelfsige] to do so and showed great miracles that she was minded there to repose with her friends." In the reign of King Ethelred they were translated to Thorney, but in the reign of King Henry I they were restored to Peterborough.

Saints Cyneburga, Cyneswitha and Tibba are commemorated on October 6.

Holy Mothers Cyneburga, Cyneswitha and Tibba, pray to God for us!

(Sources: David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978 pp. 97-98; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, IV, 180; John of Tynemouth, in *Nova Legenda Anglie*, pp. 130-132; Trevor Bevis, *Fenland Saints and Shrines*, March: Westrydale Press, 1981, p. 4; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 103-104, 297)

28. SAINT DECUMAN, MONK-MARTYR OF WATCHET

Our holy Father Decuman was probably of Romano-British origin since his name means "farmer" of the provincial tax of one-tenth. Since there are Christian Roman inscriptions in the wall of the parish church of Llafihangel Cwm-Du in Breconshire, and since there is a chapel dedicated to St. Decuman in the same parish, it has been suggested that St. Decuman came from Breconshire, although his (rather unreliable) *Life* says that he came from West Wales. If so, then he probably set out on his missionary journeys from Breconshire to Pembrokeshire sometime in the sixth century; for it is known that he founded the monastery of Rhoscrowther in Pembrokeshire, and was probably also the original patron of the adjoining parish of Pwllcrochan.

From Pembrokeshire St. Decuman set out in a coracle across the Bristol Channel and landed "near [what later became the site of] Dunster castle" on the north coast of Somerset. This largely desert area pleased the saint, and for several years he lived the life of a hermit on the site of what is now the church of St. Decuman at Watchet, one thousand yards from the sea on a slight hill. He nourished himself partly on the milk of a cow.

While the saint was praying one day, he was murdered by "a son of Belial" who cut off the top of his head with a spade. It is said that he carried his head to the site of the present holy well of St. Decuman. Many miracles were recorded there down the centuries.

St. Decuman is commemorated on August 27.

Holy Monk-Martyr Decuman, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Baring-Gould, *Lives of the British Saints*, vol. II, pp. 323-324; H.M. Porter, *The Celtic Church in Somerset*, Bath: Morgan Books, 1971, pp. 81-84; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 105; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, p. 247)

29. SAINT DIUMA, BISHOP OF MERCIA

Our holy Father Diuma was of Irish origin. He was one of four priests who were sent by St. Finan, bishop of Lindisfarne, to evangelize Mercia after the baptism of King Peada. The other priests were St. Cedd, the future bishop of London, Betti and Adda. The apostolate of these four men was most successful. When Peada died in 654, King Oswy of Northumbria ruled Mercia for a few years; and in this period Diuma was consecrated bishop of the Mercians and Middle Anglians by St. Finan. He worked mainly among the East Anglians and died in a district called Infeppingum in the year 658. He was buried at Charlbury in Oxfordshire.

St. Diuma is commemorated on December 7.

Holy Father Diuma, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, II, 2; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 107)

30. SAINT DUNSTAN, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Early Years

Our holy Father Dunstan was born in the village of Baltonsborough, near Glastonbury, in about the year 909. His parents were of noble stock, and were called Herstan and Cynedritha. When the saint was still in his mother's womb, she went to church on the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord – Candlemas, as it was known in the West. According to the custom, everyone was holding lighted candles in their hands. Suddenly all the candles went out. Equally suddenly, Cynedritha's candle was rekindled; the amazed congregation then rekindled their candles from hers. This was taken as a sign that the child she was carrying would be a great light in the Church, from whom many others would draw enlightenment and inspiration.

The saint knew Glastonbury from his earliest years. According to an ancient tradition then current, the first Christians who came to England found at Glastonbury 'an ancient church not built by human hands and prepared by God for the salvation of men, which the Lord by many miracles showed to have been dedicated to Himself and the Most Holy Mother of God Mary'.

Once the young Dunstan was taken there on a pilgrimage by his father. During the night an old man dressed in a shining white garment appeared to him in a vision, and led him through all the rooms of the holy church. He also showed him the monastery buildings which were to be built by him during his abbacy in the very order in which they were later constructed.

On seeing their son's promise, Herstan and Cynedritha sent him to Glastonbury to be educated. Like a bee, he darted through many fields of religious literature. He also learned from the Irish pilgrims who came to venerate the tomb of St. Patrick.

Once he fell ill and was on the point of death. In the middle of the night, however, he received a sudden access of strength, and, springing up immediately, went with God's guidance towards the monastery. Some dogs rushed at him, barking furiously; but he repulsed them with a thin twig and carried on. Having arrived at the church, he climbed onto the roof by a route that the workmen used, and, descending down the other side, came to a little chamber, where he innocently fell asleep. There he was found the next morning, to the amazement of everyone. For he had been at the point of death, as his nurse witnessed, and the chamber where he fell asleep was very difficult to get to. The nurse was especially amazed, and went up onto the roof to take a look round.

Besides his religious activities, Dunstan cultivated the arts of metalworking, painting and harp-playing. One day, he was invited to the house of a certain noblewoman called Ethelwynn. She had asked him to design a stole to be used in the

Divine services which she would then adorn with gold and silver and precious stones. Dunstan came, bringing his harp with him. Then, as they were returning to work after supper, the harp, which was hanging on the wall far from the reach of any visible hand, spontaneously began to play the melody of the hymn: 'Let the souls of the saints who have followed in the footsteps of Christ rejoice in the heavens. Since they have shed their blood for His love, they will reign with Christ forever!' Everyone was amazed at the miracle, wondering what it could mean.

In 923, Archbishop Plegmund of Canterbury reposed in the Lord, and was succeeded by Dunstan's uncle, Athelm, Bishop of Wells. Athelm invited the saint to stay with him at Canterbury in the archbishop's house, and Dunstan accepted. Archbishop Athelm foresaw the future greatness of his nephew and introduced him to King Athelstan, who showed him great favour.

But then a temptation was allowed to try him. Certain companions and relatives of his at the court became jealous of Dunstan's success and accused him to the king of practising black magic. The soldier of Christ did not falter, but remembered the words of David: 'Unjust witnesses are risen up against me, and injustice hath lied to itself'. He placed before his spiritual eyes the promise of Christ: 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad; for great is your reward in heaven.' And so, comforted by these words, he 'became as a deaf man in whose mouth are no reproofs'; for when the dogs barked at him he hardly ever opened his mouth. But their madness grew more frenzied, and, binding him like a sheep by the arms and legs, they threw him into a muddy pool and trampled on him. He got up and set off for a friend's house which was about a mile away. But then the friend's dogs ran keenly up to him, and, thinking him to be more a monster than a man, started barking at him savagely. However, they soon recognized his soothing voice and calmed down. Sighing deeply, the servant of God reflected how the irrational nature of animals showed him more kindness than the animal ferocity of his kinsmen.

Shortly after this, the saint went to stay with another relative of his, St. Alphege 'the Bald', Bishop of Winchester. Once the holy bishop was going with Dunstan to the dedication of a church at the west gate of the city. After the festivities, when they were returning past the church of St. Gregory, the bishop called a halt for Compline. As they were putting their heads together for the absolution, a stone suddenly fell out of the empty sky and passed between them, injuring no one but grazing their heads. Where could this have come from, people reflected, if not from the evil one?

St. Alphege several times asked Dunstan to become a monk. But he refused, pleading that he wanted to marry. Then the bishop prayed to the Lord that the young man would pay heed to his warnings. Immediately Dunstan was seized by an intolerable pain in his bladder which passed to his whole body. Thinking that he had elephantiasis and that he was on the point of death, in great anguish he sent for the

holy bishop whom he had just spurned. When the bishop arrived, he announced to him his intention of following his salutary advice. Chastened, and now recovered from his illness, Dunstan received the monastic tonsure.

St. Alphege also ordained him to the priesthood, and then sent him back to Glastonbury. There he built for himself a very narrow cell in which to fast and pray. He also occupied himself in making church bells and other ecclesiastical ornaments.

Now there died a close friend of the saint's, a deacon by the name of Wulfred. Not long after his repose, Wulfred appeared to Dunstan and revealed to him many heavenly mysteries, as well as the whole course of his future life. When Dunstan asked for a sign whereby he could be assured of the truth of these revelations, Wulfred led him to the cemetery, and, pointing to an unused plot, said: 'You will know that what I say is true from the fact that in three days' time a priest will be buried here, although he has not yet fallen ill.' On awaking, Dunstan related the prophecy to some others; and as they were coming back from the cemetery the chaplain of a certain very religious noblewoman came up and asked for that plot for his burial. Shortly after, he sickened and died; and within three days he had been buried in that very spot.

Now there was a very rich woman of royal birth and strictly religious upbringing called Ethelfleda. On the death of her husband, wishing to live a widow's life in accordance with her strength, she bought a small house near the church so as to be able to serve the Lord day and night. Dunstan loved her very much; and she diligently supported him for Christ's, as well as for kinship's, sake.

Among other good works, she was much given to hospitality; and on one occasion she prepared a meal for King Athelstan, who was coming to Glastonbury to pray. The day before his visit, the king's stewards came to see that everything was suitably prepared, and remarked that there was not enough mead. She replied: 'My mistress, the Most Holy Mother of God, will not let me go short, either in mead or in anything else pertaining to the royal dignity.' After saying this, she entered the Old Church, and, prostrating herself, prayed to the King of all that He would grant her an abundance of provisions for the service of the king.

The king duly arrived with a large company in attendance. After the Divine Liturgy, he joyfully came to his invited seat. The supply of mead was exhausted at the first toast, but God abundantly made up the deficiency so that nothing was lacking for the whole day. However, when the king's servants told him of the miracle, he abruptly stopped and said to his men: 'We have sinned by over-burdening this handmaid of God with our unnecessarily large numbers.' And getting to his feet, he bade farewell to her and continued on his way.

Now Ethelfleda fell seriously ill, and the saint prepared her for her end, looking after her as if she were his own mother. Because of this, he was late for Vespers one

day, and at dusk came back to the church to celebrate the delayed service. As he was standing outside the church chanting psalms with the brethren, he saw coming from the direction of the setting sun a white dove of extraordinary beauty with wing-tips sparkling like fire that entered the house of Ethelfleda.

After the service, the saint went back to the house. Standing by the curtain at the entrance to her bedroom, he could hear her having a serious conversation with what seemed to be an intimate friend; and, wondering who it might be, he asked her maidservants who were standing by. They replied that they did not know. 'Before you came,' they said, 'the chamber was filled with a reddish light of extraordinary splendour. That has stopped, but she, as you can hear, has not ceased from carrying on a conversation with her interlocutor.' Dunstan sat down until she had finished her conversation. Then, drawing back the curtain, he entered her room and asked her with whom she had been speaking. 'You yourself saw him coming before you came here,' she said, 'and do you ask me now with whom I have been speaking? For he who spoke with me is the same person who appeared to you as you were chanting psalms outside the church. And he told me in private everything concerning my departure from this life. But there is no need for you and your friends to weep for me – God will graciously visit me at my death and allow me to enter into the joys of Paradise. However, I want you to do this for me as if I were your only friend: hasten early in the morning, prepare a funeral vestment for me to wear, make ready a bath, and after my bath celebrate the Divine Liturgy, communicating me in the Holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. At that moment, with God leading me, I shall go the way of all the earth.' Dunstan promptly obeyed the blessed lady's commands to the last detail. And after partaking of the Holy Mysteries, just as the Liturgy was coming to an end, Ethelfleda gave up her soul into the hands of her Creator.

In 939, King Athelstan died, and was succeeded on the throne of England by King Edmund. Dunstan became one of his counsellors, for his court at Cheddar was not far from Glastonbury. As in Athelstan's reign, this provoked the envy of some of the courtiers, who slandered the saint to the king and procured his banishment. Dunstan then asked the help of some foreign envoys who were then at court, and they, taking pity on him, promised him their hospitality and everything he might need if he accompanied them back to their kingdom.

The next day the king rode out hunting with his men. As they came to the forest, they dispersed in friendly competition along different paths. However, the baying of the dogs and the calling of the horns enabled many of the stags to make a quick escape; and only the king, with one pack of dogs, found himself on the track of a stag. In his flight the exhausted animal came to a very deep gorge into which he suddenly hurled himself, followed by the dogs. The king, following close behind, was accelerating when he saw the gorge. Desperately he tried hold back his horse, but without success. With all hope for his life gone, he commended his soul into the hands of God, saying within himself: 'I thank Thee, O God Most High, that as far as I can remember, I have

not harmed anyone at this time, except only Dunstan, and I shall be reconciled with him promptly if my life is saved.' When he had said this, his horse came to a standstill on the very edge of the abyss.

Praising and giving thanks to God, the king realized that he had come so near to being killed in order that Dunstan might be vindicated; and on his return he ordered him to be brought before him without delay. When Dunstan came in, he said: 'Hurry up, get a horse, and come with me and my soldiers.' And, mounting their horses, they immediately took the road to Glastonbury. On arrival, they went into the church to pray; and after praying and wiping the tears from his eyes, the king again called the servant of God to him. Taking him by the hand, he kissed it and led him to the priest's chair. Having seated him in it, he said: 'Be the powerful incumbent of this seat and the most faithful abbot of this church. And whatever you need, whether for the Divine services or for the sacred Rule, I shall devoutly supply from my royal bounty.'

Abbot of Glastonbury

Dunstan was placed in charge of the monastery at Glastonbury in the year 943, and immediately instituted the strict application of St. Benedict's Rule for the monks, thus giving a major impetus to the revival of monasticism in England after the devastation of the Viking wars. He also began to build many new buildings for the monastery in accordance with his childhood vision. One day, a great beam was being passed to the roof of the church, and was about to touch it when it began to tilt downwards and fall, threatening the lives of many people below. A cry went up, and the saint's eyes were drawn to the scene. With his right hand he made the sign of the Cross, and lo! By the invisible power of God the beam was restored to its place.

Enraged by these miracles, which were drawing the souls of their beholders closer to the Lord, Satan tempted the saint by appearing to him in many fearful guises. One night, as he was keeping vigil at the altar of St. George and resting a little, the devil came up behind him in the form of a bear, threatening to devour him. At first the man of God tried to beat him with a staff which he always carried with him; but to no avail. Then he resorted to the stronger spiritual weapon of psalmody: 'Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Him flee from before His face'. The deceiver fled in confusion…

Through another vision of evil spirits, the saint prophesied the death of King Edmund. For as he was travelling in the king's escort, he suddenly saw a black form running among the king's trumpeters. After gazing at it for a long time in amazement, he turned to his neighbour, 'Half-King' Athelstan, the alderman of East Anglia, and said: 'Beloved, do you see what I see?' 'Nothing out of the ordinary,' he replied. 'Sign yourself with the sign of the Holy Cross, and then see if you can see what I see,' said the holy man. When he did this, Athelstan also saw the evil spirit. When they made the sign of the Cross again, the enemy disappeared.

As they continued on their way, Athelstan asked the saint to what extent this vision of theirs was related to a dream he had had, in which he had seen the king fall asleep while feasting among his nobles, whereupon almost all the chief men and counsellors had turned into sheep and goats. Dunstan immediately replied: 'The king's sleep means his death; but the changing of the chief men and counsellors into mute and irrational beasts refers to the future, when almost all the chief men and rulers will of their own accord deviate from the way of truth.'

As they came to the king's quarters, they were still discussing these matters. And at dusk on the same day Dunstan again saw the evil spirit wandering among the servants at the king's banquet. Then, on the very day on which the king was killed, May 26, 946, he saw it for the third time as the king was returning from the Divine Liturgy to the banquet-hall. During the feast, the king saw a man named Liofa, whom he had banished from the kingdom six years before, sitting at a table next to an alderman. He got up and tried to drive the outlaw from the hall, but was stabbed by him and died. The king's body was taken to Glastonbury, where St. Dunstan performed the funeral service.

Edmund was succeeded by his brother Edred, who loved Dunstan no less than his predecessors, loading him with honours and submitting to his wise counsel.

In 953, Bishop Ethelgar of Crediton died; whereupon King Edred tried to persuade the saint to accept the vacant see. But he refused, not wishing to desert the king, whom he loved, for the sake of the episcopate. The king then asked his mother, St. Elgiva, who was abbess of Shaftesbury, to intercede. So she invited him to a royal banquet and again put forward the same proposal. But he replied: 'I ask you, lady, not to ask me this again; for I tell you truly: I must not be made a bishop during the lifetime of your son the king.'

The Lord, however, was not pleased by Dunstan's refusal, as was revealed to him in a vision that night. For he saw himself returning from a pilgrimage to the apostles' tombs in Rome and was coming near the Mons Gaudium. Then St. Peter and his fellow apostles Paul and Andrew approached him. Each held in his hand a sword, which they offered him. On Peter's sword were inscribed the words: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' Then Andrew sang sweetly from the Gospel: 'Take My yoke upon you, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' Peter then raised a staff which he held in his hand and struck Dunstan lightly on the palm, saying: 'Take this as a warning not to refuse the yoke of the Lord in future.' Waking up, the saint asked a monk who was sleeping in the same room who it was that had struck him. He said that he did not know. Dunstan thought for a while, and then said: 'Now I know, my son, now I know by whom I have been struck.'

In the morning he recounted his vision to the king, who said: 'Since the swords you took up with the apostles' blessing are the weapons of the Holy Spirit, you can be quite certain that through the sword given you by the blessed Peter and inscribed with the word of God, you are to receive the archbishopric from heaven.' As for the other swords, that given by St. Paul may have signified the see of London, whose cathedral church was dedicated to the apostle and which Dunstan held for a short period before he became archbishop. And that of St. Andrew may have signified the see of Rochester, whose church was dedicated to the First-Called and which Dunstan was called upon to defend in his later years.

King Edred had been chronically sick throughout his reign, and now he came to die. Feeling his end draw near, he sent a messenger to Dunstan to bring his treasures from Glastonbury, where the saint had been looking after them, to Frome, where the king lay. As Dunstan was riding to Frome, on St. Clement's day, 955, he suddenly heard a voice from heaven: 'King Edred now rests in peace.' At the sound of the voice, his horse, unable to bear the angelic power, fell dead to the ground, astonishing the saint's companions. When he had explained to them the voice and its meaning, and as they were blessing God and commending the soul of the dead man into the hands of God, messengers came up and confirmed the truth of the voice. And so the walls of the palace were resounding to cries of lamentation as the saint entered. He found the royal corpse abandoned; and so, faithful in death as in life, he performed the funeral service and buried the king in the Old Minster, Winchester.

The death of King Edred marked the end of the peaceful part of St. Dunstan's tenure of the Glastonbury abbacy. For he was succeeded by Edwig (Edwy), the son of King Edmund - a rash youth under the influence of a mother and daughter, both named Elgiva, who wanted him to choose one of them to be his wife. This wanton behaviour of the king was to bring him into conflict with the saint…

Now the time came for the anointing and consecration of the new king after his election by the people. The ceremony was duly performed, but then the king had no time to attend the banquet with his nobles and bishops, but immediately ran after the loose women. When the holy Archbishop Oda saw that the king's wilfulness on the day of his coronation displeased all the counsellors sitting around, he said to his fellow-bishops and the other leading men: 'Let some of you, pray, go and fetch the king, so that he may, as is fitting, be a pleasant companion to his followers at the royal banquet.' But one by one, fearing to incur the king's wrath or the women's complaint, they began to demur. Finally, they chose from among them two whom they knew to be strong in spirit – Abbot Dunstan and Bishop Cynesige, a kinsman of Dunstan's, to go in obedience to the command of all and bring back the king, whether he wished it or not.

Entering the king's chamber in accordance with their superiors' command, Dunstan and Cynesige found the king's crown, which was bound with gold, silver and precious

stones, and shone with a many-coloured light, carelessly thrown on the floor far away from his head, while the king himself wallowed between the two women as if he were in a pig-sty. They said to him: 'Our nobles have sent us to you to ask you to come as quickly as possible to your proper seat, and not to scorn to be present at the joyful banquet of your chief men.' But when the king did not want to rise, Dunstan, after first rebuking the folly of the women, drew him by his hand from his licentious reclining with them, replaced the crown on his head, and brought him with him to the royal assembly by force.

Like Jezabel of old, the elder Elgiva now conceived a violent hatred for Dunstan and obtained the consent of the king to deprive him of all his honours and possessions, and to expel him from the kingdom. Dunstan's friends and supporters were also persecuted. Elgiva even sent secret agents to kill Dunstan before he could leave the country. But he eluded her grasp, and made a speedy passage to the continent. There he was kindly received by Count Arnulf of Flanders, staying in the Abbey of St. Peter in Ghent.

The saint did not cease to weep and groan day and night, thinking of his country and the spiritual condition of his monastery. One night, he dreamed that he was with a group of brethren as they were coming to the end of the Vespers psalms. After the canticle, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord', they began to sing the antiphon from Job: 'Why have ye disparaged his truthful words, and composed speeches to reprove him, and…' At this point the chant stopped and they all fell silent; nor was he able to persuade them to complete either the words or the melody. Several times they went back to the same point in the chant, never did they say the last words. And he, rebuking them in the same vision, said: 'Why do you not want to end the antiphon with the words: "what ye have had in mind ye discharge"?' Then came the Divine reply: 'Because, I say, they will never discharge what they are striving for in their minds – to tear you away from the government of this monastery.' Waking up, the saint gave thanks to God the Most High, his Comforter. And indeed, some of the people in the vision turned out later to have been plotting against him in secret.

King Edwig married the younger Elgiva, although the union was within the forbidden degrees of kinship. As a result, the northern parts of the English kingdom, Mercia and Northumbria, rebelled against him, and chose his brother Edgar as their king. And in the next year Archbishop Oda dissolved his marriage. When Elgiva tried to rejoin the king, she was caught by men from the north; they severed the muscles and sinews of her lower limbs, and she died in agony a few days later. Finally, Edwig died, and when Edgar reunited the kingdom under his sole rule, he recalled Dunstan from exile…

Archbishop of Canterbury

In the year 958 King Edgar 'the Peaceable' ascended the throne. In the same year St.

Dunstan was made Bishop of Worcester. Then, in 959, he was transferred to the see of London. And in 960 he was elected Archbishop of Canterbury.

The truly 'symphonic' cooperation of King Edgar and Archbishop Dunstan laid the foundation of a golden age in the history of the Anglo-Saxon Church. This age had been prophesied by a heavenly voice which St. Dunstan had heard in 943, at the birth of Edgar: 'Peace to England as long as this child reigns, and our Dunstan survives.' 'The succession of events,' wrote William of Malmesbury, 'was in unison with the heavenly oracle; to such an extent did ecclesiastical glory flourish and martial clamour decay while he was alive.'

However, the early part of Edgar's reign was marred by his attempts to seduce two nuns of Wilton, St. Wulfhilda and Wulfrida, by the second of whom he had a daughter, St. Edith. For this he was placed on a penance by St. Dunstan, and was not allowed to wear his crown from his sixteenth to his thirtieth year. He accepted this penance humbly, and it is probably for this reason that his coronation did not take place until the year 973, in a ceremony in Bath Abbey which became the model for all future English coronations.

After Dunstan had been elected archbishop, he set off, like all English archbishops-elect, for Rome, to receive the pallium (omophorion) from the Pope. On the road he gave away all his provisions to the poor, which greatly irritated his servant. So when he asked him one day: 'What do you have to sustain us tonight?', the servant replied: 'Absolutely nothing; for you have taken no care about it – you have given everything away, either to our own men or to strangers.' Then the bishop said: 'I ask you not to be too worried by this; for Christ our Lord is bountiful to all those who believe in Him.' But the steward replied again: 'Now you will see what your Christ will give you tonight – you who have squandered everything.' And he continued scoffing as the saint went in search of a place to serve Vespers. His scoffing soon ceased, however, when they were met by messengers of an abbot who had been waiting for them for three days, and who now most charitably supplied the needs of the saint and his men for many days ahead.

On returning from Rome, Dunstan immediately set about spreading the monastic reforms which he had initiated at Glastonbury; and he found the king a willing helper in this holy task. Already, as Bishop of London, he had founded a small monastery of twelve monks at Westminster with St. Wulsin as abbot. Now he appointed his disciples Saints Oswald and Ethelwold, both zealous monks, to the sees of Worcester and Winchester respectively; and under their vigorous leadership the south of England was soon covered with Benedictine monasteries.

The saint cared for the people as a father for his children. One practical measure he introduced was to order gold or silver pegs to be fastened to the drinking jugs in taverns. This reminded people not to drink more than the just measure and greatly

reduced drunkenness and quarrels.

He could be strict, too, when the occasion demanded it. Once three false coiners were caught and sentenced to have their hands cut off. On that day, which was the Feast of Pentecost, the saint was going to celebrate the Divine Liturgy; but he waited, asking whether the sentence on the coiners had been carried out. The reply came that the sentence had been deferred to another day out of respect for the feast. Then the saint said: 'I shall on no account go to the altar today until they have suffered the appointed penalty; for I am concerned in this matter.' For the criminals were in his jurisdiction. As he spoke, tears gushed down his cheeks, witnessing to his love for the condemned men. But when they had been punished, he washed his face and went up to the altar, saying: 'Now I am confident that the Almighty will accept the Sacrifice from my hands.'

Once the saint was rapt up to Heaven in a vision, and saw his mother being married to a great king amidst the joyful chanting of the heavenly hosts. After this had continued for some time, one of the chanters, a young man clothed in a shining white garment, came up to Dunstan and said: 'How is it that you see and hear this multitude glorifying the great King, while you, who ought to be especially joyful at the marriage of your mother, remain silent?' Dunstan replied that he did not know the chants that were being sung, nor did he know how he could glorify the King. The young man said: 'Do you wish me to instruct you how to chant?' When Dunstan humbly replied that he did, the young man taught him the antiphon: 'O King and Lord of all nations, for the sake of the throne of Thy majesty grant unto us the forgiveness of our sins, O Christ our King. Alleluia.' This antiphon was repeated several times in the vision until it was firmly established in the saint's memory. And immediately he awoke he ordered a monk to write down what he had so recently learned. Then he commanded all those in obedience to him, both monks and clergy, to learn it. Thus did the saint learn to glorify with chants and spiritual songs the marriage between Christ and His Mother, the Holy Church.

On another occasion the king asked the saint to postpone the beginning of the Divine Liturgy until he had returned from hunting. The third hour was approaching, and the man of God was standing clad in his hierarchical garments, immersed in tearful prayer. Suddenly he fell into a light slumber and was rapt up to Heaven, where he heard the angels singing; 'Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.' Coming to himself, he asked whether the king had arrived. The answer was that he had not. Again he prayed, and again he was rapt up to Heaven, where he heard the last words of the Liturgy being pronounced in a high voice. At that moment some clergy ran up to him and told him that the king had arrived. But he replied that he had already been present at the Liturgy, and would not be present at or celebrate it again that day. On being asked why, he revealed to them his vision, after which he forbade the king to hunt again on the Lord's Day. Then he taught the clergy the 'Kyrie eleison' which he had heard in the heavens.

Once a nobleman entered into an uncanonical marriage. When he refused to renounce it, Dunstan excommunicated him. The nobleman then went to Rome, where he obtained from the Pope a written order to the archbishop compelling him to allow the marriage. But Dunstan, as his name ('firm rock') implied, was firm as a rock: 'I am not to be moved,' he said, 'even by the threat of death, from the authority of my Lord.' In this way the saint demonstrated his truly Orthodox consciousness and freedom from the papist heresy that sought to place the Pope's authority above that of the Universal Church. Nor did the king try to persuade him to disobey the King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ. And so the nobleman came to repentance, and appeared before Dunstan barefoot and with a candle in his hand; whereupon he was released from his ban.

Now in the capital city of Winchester opposition arose against the monastic reforms which St. Ethelwold, backed by St. Dunstan, was introducing. The secular clergy decided to refer the matter to the king, who in turn referred it to the saint. Dunstan then asked the king to convene a council in Winchester, which met in the refectory of the Old Minster in the presence of the king and queen, the nobles, monks and clergy. The final decision was announced by St. Dunstan: 'This Old Minster was founded as a habitation for monks. Let those who benefit from its revenues henceforth live as true monks.' It is said that during the council, when the possibility of restoring the secular clergy to the Old Minster was being discussed, a cross spoke fro the wall: 'Far be it from you! You have done well: to change again would be wrong.'

However, the secular party did not leave it at that. When King Edgar died in 975, and the throne passed to his young son Edward, a great storm arose against the monks in many parts of the country, and the secular clergy who had been expelled from the Old Minster used the council convened at Calne in 977 to renew their complaint. But Dunstan was not to be moved. 'Since, in my old age,' he said, 'you exert yourselves in the stirring up of old quarrels, I confess that I refuse to give in, but commit the cause of His Church to Christ the Judge.' His words were confirmed by God's verdict. For as he spoke the house was suddenly shaken; the floor of the upper room in which they were assembly fell under their feet; and the enemies of the Church were thrown to the ground and crushed by the falling timber. Only the beam on which the saint was sitting did not move.

The climax of the troubles came with the murder of King Edward in 979. St. Dunstan was greatly saddened by the death of his beloved spiritual son, and, at the coronation of his half-brother, Ethelred, at Kingston, he prophesied great sorrow for the English people in the coming reign. (The stone upon which the anointing took place still exists, in the middle of Kingston.) The prophecy was exactly fulfilled after the death of the saint.

Further sorrows awaited him. In 984, St. Ethelwold and the Bishop of Rochester

came to visit him in Canterbury. He received them with great joy; but when they were about to return to their sees, he burst into tears, and his weeping was so intense that he could hardly speak. The bishops were terrified by this unusual behaviour and asked him the reason. After a pause he replied: 'I weep because I know that you will soon die.' 'Don't prophesy such terrible things, most holy Father,' they said, 'for we shall not die, but shall see each other safe and sound another time.' But Dunstan confirmed his previous words, saying: 'What I have said will come to pass; for you will die to this world but live to God. Nor must you remain any longer in this life, but you will go to God to reign with Him forever.' The bishops returned to their sees, sobered by a pious fear of God. Within a few days they both reposed in peace.

As archbishop, Dunstan continued to care for the western monasteries which he had founded or restored. Once he came to the monastery at Bath, where he was charitably received by the brethren. After lunch, he was rapt up in a vision and saw one of the pupils of the nearby Glastonbury school being borne away into the heavens amidst a great host of the heavenly citizens. The next day, a certain Ceolwy came from Glastonbury to ask his blessing and seek his advice on certain problems to do with the monastery and the brethren. When the saint had given him his blessing, he asked him kindly whether everything was well with the brethren. Ceolwy replied that everything was well, completely forgetting about the boy's death. But Dunstan gently said: 'I do not suppose that everything could be well for all of you if someone has died.' Then Ceolwy replied: 'Everything is well indeed, except that one of our boys died yesterday at noon.' 'That is what I was saying,' said the archbishop. 'May his spirit rest in peace in accordance with the vision we have been granted.'

On another occasion he was staying at Glastonbury and walking with a certain monk called Elfsige near the western gates of the Old Church. Suddenly he heard a voice from heaven saying: 'Come, Elfsige, come.' Then, turning to the monk, he said: 'Hurry, prepare yourself, brother; for today you have been called by the Lord to leave this world and go to Him.' The prophecy was fulfilled a few days later.

The saint was constant in prayer and vigil, and when dawn broke he would often be seen applying himself to the correction of errors in manuscripts. During the day, he would give judgement between man and man, or resolve quarrels, or support widows, orphans and strangers in their necessities. He loved to tell stories from the lives of the saints (the martyrdom of St. Edmund was a particular favourite of his), speaking in both Latin and English. Everyone, including visitors from abroad, was enriched by his holy counsel. And during the Divine Liturgy he would pray with eyes and hands directed to Heaven and tears streaming down his cheeks.

Repose and Miracles

But now it came for the man of God to go the way of all flesh.

On the eve of the Feast of the Ascension, 988, a priest of the saint's monastic family at Canterbury, the future Bishop of Elmham, Elfgar 'the Almsgiver', had the following vision. Dunstan was sitting on his Episcopal throne, dictating canon law to a scribe. While he was intent on these things, a great host of heavenly beings was seen entering the church through all the entrances. They surrounded the bishop with their festal array and cried: 'Rejoice, our Dunstan! If you are ready, come, join our fellowship as a most honoured member!' But he said: 'You know, holy spirits, that I must preach to the assembled people in the mother church and communicate them in the Holy Mysteries of the Lord. So I cannot possibly come.' To which they replied: 'Be ready to come to us on the Sabbath.'

On the Feast of the Ascension, the saint preached three sermons whose power and glow was wonderful. Then, having said farewell for the last time to his cathedral family, he suddenly felt weak and retired to his bed. And on the morning of the Sabbath, May 19, 988, when the Mattins hymns were finished, he told the brethren to come to him. In their presence he commended his spirit to God and received the Holy Mysteries, which had been celebrated on the holy table in his presence. Then, giving thanks to God, he began to chant the words of David: 'He made a remembrance of His wondrous deeds; merciful and compassionate is the Lord; He hath given food to them that fear Him.' With these words he rested in peace.

St. Dunstan was buried with great honour in Christchurch, Canterbury. In 1029 he was canonized by a council of bishops in Winchester.

Very soon, miracles were being wrought at his tomb.

A woman who had been blind for many years was healed after watching and praying at his tomb.

A priest was cured of paralysis at his tomb. But a little later, while he was celebrating and giving thanks to God and St. Dunstan, he said: 'And if there had been no Dunstan, I should still have been cured.' Immediately he was struck with his former paralysis, and died soon after.

A boy who had been dumb and lame from his birth was cured at the tomb of the saint. 'Glory to God in the highest. Alleluia' were his first words, and he continued to extol the miracle for the rest of his life.

A girl who had been blind from her birth was brought to the tomb of the saint by her mother. When her eyes were opened she leapt for joy and said: 'Mother, what are these beautiful things which I see?' 'Do you see something, my darling?' asked the mother. 'A beautiful man commanded me to see these beautiful things,' she said.

A certain German named Clement had been excommunicated for certain sins, and had been dragged from place to place for seven years, possessed by a demon. Coming to the tomb of the saint, he attended the all-night vigil. At the response, 'You see a miracle,' he leapt up and vomited the demon out together with some blood.

In the year 1012, a controversy arose between the communities of Canterbury and Glastonbury as to which of them possessed the bones of the saint. The argument was finally settled in 1508, when Archbishop Wareham found the saint's coffin at Canterbury with the inscription: 'Here rests St. Dunstan'. The holy relics were found wrapped in linen and with a very fragrant odour, as of balsam, which testified to the heavenly glory of which the saint had been counted worthy.

St. Dunstan is commemorated on May 19.

Holy Father Dunstan, pray to God for us!

(Sources: W. Stubbs, *Memorials of St. Dunstan,* Rolls series, 1874, containing the earliest "Vita Dunstani" by Saxon priest B. (c. 1000) and the eleventh-century *Lives* by Abelard, Osbert and Edmer; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum* and *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum* and *De Antiquitate Glastoniae Ecclesiae,* 2; Eleanor Duckett, *Saint Dunstan of Canterbury,* London: Collins, 1955; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 112; Christopher Brooks, *The Saxon and Norman Kings*, London: Fontana, 1963, pp. 127-128; Andrew Prescott, *The Benedictional of St. Aethelwold*, London: The British Library, 2002, p. 3; Hieromonk Makarios, *The Synaxarion,* vol. 5: May-June, Ormylia, 2005, p. 216)

31. SAINT EANSWYTHE, ABBESS OF FOLKESTONE

Our holy Mother Eanswythe was the only daughter of the pagan King Eadbald of Kent and the Christian Queen Emma, daughter of the king of the Franks. She was probably born around 614. From early childhood she renounced worldly pomp and sought to serve God alone. However, her father had other designs for her and urged her to marry. But Eanswythe firmly stuck to her purpose of becoming a nun. She told her father that if he was recommending to her an everlasting love and an immortal spouse, the fruit of marriage with whom would, while preserving her virginity, bring her endless joy, then she would willingly comply with his counsel. If, on the other hand, he was offering her a partnership in which love would be mingled with dislike, a human husband, children who would die, and all this at the cost of her virginity, then even the advice of her father would tell her to choose the better thing, unless he wished to strip himself of the title of father.

"For Mary," she went on, "hath chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from her. Since, therefore, in human affairs the universal law of death prevails, I thirst for the embrace of a heavenly and immortal spouse. For Him do I preserve the flower of my virginity; if I love Him, I am chaste; if I touch Him, I am pure; if I embrace Him, I am a virgin! For the service of a spouse such as this, I beseech you, father, to build me a house of prayer!"

And so, finally persuaded, King Eanbald built a church dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul within Folkestone fortress, and close to it a monastery with its own church for Eanswythe.

While the monastery was in the process of being built, a pagan Northumbrian prince came in person to ask for the hand of the holy virgin in marriage. Her father now wavered, and tried once more to persuade her to accept such a favourable offer. However, Eanswythe's mind was made up, and she thought of an excellent expedient whereby she might get rid of the unwelcome suitor. She took him to the unfinished building, and stopped before a beam that was too short for the place it was required to fill.

"This noble prince," she said, "earnestly desires to have me, the handmaid of Christ, for his companion. He seeks me for his bride. Oh, what a foolish exchange, what hateful stupidity, what an unbearable loss, if I were to exchange heavenly things for earthly, everlasting joys for those which pass. Nevertheless, though this man is mortal and earthly, I will take him for husband if, through the power of his god, he can by prayer make this piece of wood as long as is required. If he cannot, then let him leave me alone."

The prince was quite satisfied with this proposal, but though he prayed long to

each of his gods in turn, it was of no avail, and, covered with confusion, he went away. Eanswythe then approached the beam, and at her prayer it immediately extended itself to the required length.

St. Eanswythe's monastery was founded, according to tradition, in 630, being probably the earliest convent in Anglo-Saxon England. Eanswythe was not immediately made abbess, but a little later. Now it happened that water had to be carried from a spring a long way from the monastery. Abbess Eanswythe prayed, went to the spring, and, striking the rock with her crosier, bade the water follow her. This it did, uphill and over rocks and streams, until it arrived at her monastery. From that time on, the spring plentifully supplied the nuns with water. The holy virgin performed other miracles both before and after her death, including the restoring of sight to a blind woman and the release of a man possessed by a demon.

She died very young, probably on August 31, 640, after only ten years of monastic life.

The monastery was probably destroyed in the ninth century. In 927, King Athelstan gave the land on which it had been situated to the monks of Christchurch, Canterbury, calling it the place "where there was once a monastery and abbey of holy virgins, and where St. Eanswythe was buried." On September 12, 1138, the relics of the saint were again translated to the church of Saints Mary and Eanswythe. On June 17, 1885, her relics were discovered in a twelfth-century reliquary in the chancel wall of the church. A recent archaeological investigation has again authenticated the holy relics.

St. Eanswythe is commemorated on August 31.

Holy Mother Eanswythe, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Dame Eanswythe Edwards, *Dame Eanswythe of Folkestone*, 1980; the Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. 40, p. 685; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 115-116; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 43-44; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54Xb-7sbOA4)

32. SAINTS EATA, BISHOP OF HEXHAM, AND BOISIL, ABBOT OF MELROSE

Our holy Father Eata was one of twelve English boys educated by St. Aidan at Lindisfarne. He became a monk, and then abbot, of Melrose, and was, in the words of Simeon of Durham, "a man of exceeding gentleness".

In 659, St. Eata left with St. Cuthbert, who was one of his monks, to found the monastery of Ripon on land given him by King Alcfrith of Deira. In 661 Eata and Cuthbert returned to Melrose rather than accept the Roman-Byzantine paschalion. However, they changed their minds about the paschalion, and in 678 Eata was consecrated bishop of Bernicia. In 681 this diocese was divided into two, Lindisfarne and Hexham, and Eata ruled Lindisfarne from 681 to 685, appointing Cuthbert as superior of the monastery. In 685, when Bishop Tunbert of Hexham was deposed, Eata became bishop of Hexham while St. Cuthbert became bishop of Lindisfarne.

In 682 or 686 St. Eata succumbed to dysentery and was buried at Hexham where a chapel was later built over his grave. His relics were translated inside the church in the eleventh century. In 1113 the Roman Catholic Archbishop Thomas II of York went to Hexham and tried to have the relics brought to York because his town had no shrine of a local saint. During the night Eata appeared saying angrily, “Why will you not let me rest in the church I governed?” He then struck the Archbishop on the shoulder with his pastoral staff causing him to wake in pain and return to York without the relics. He is commemorated on October 26.

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Our holy Father **Boisil** was a monk of Melrose under St. Eata. He became so well known for his learning, holiness and prophecies that the great St. Cuthbert came to study under him in 651. The two of them would go off on preaching journeys together in the neighbouring villages.

When St. Cuthbert first arrived at Melrose, and had leaped from his horse in order to enter the church to pray, he gave his horse and travelling spear to a servant (he was still a layman at that time). Boisil was standing in front of the doors of the monastery and saw him first. Foreseeing in spirit what an illustrious man the stranger would become, he said to the bystanders:

"Behold a servant of the Lord!"

Boisil then took him to himself. A few days later, Boisil told St. Eata, the abbot of the monastery, about the arrival of Cuthbert and obtained permission to tonsure him as a monk. In 659, when Eata left with Cuthbert to found the monastery of Ripon, Boisil succeeded him as abbot. In 661, when Eata and Cuthbert returned to Melrose, they

found Boisil stricken with the plague. Cuthbert and Boisil read the Gospel of St. John together until he died. Cuthbert, too, caught the plague; but he recovered in accordance with Boisil's prophecy.

St. Boisil appeared in visions after his death. Once he appeared to one of his former pupils while he was sleeping after Mattins and said:

"Do you know me?"

"I do," said the monk; "you are Boisil."

"I am come," he answered, "to bring Egbert [St. Egbert, abbot of Iona, who was intending to travel to the continent] a message from our Lord and Saviour, which nevertheless must be delivered to him by you. Tell him, therefore, that he cannot perform the journey he has undertaken; for it is the will of God that he should rather go to instruct the monasteries of Columba."

The monk took the message to St. Egbert, but Egbert told him not to relate the vision in case it was an illusion, and decided not to change his plans.

A few days later the monk again came to Egbert and said:

"Tonight Boisil again appeared to me after Mattins, and said: 'Why did you tell Egbert that which I enjoined you in so light and cold a manner? However, go now and tell him, that whether he will or no, he shall go to Columba's monastery, because their ploughs do not go straight; and he is to bring them into the right way."

Again Egbert told him not to reveal the vision, and set off on his journey to the continent. But a storm arose, the ship ran aground, and Egbert and his companions were forced to stay in Britain. Later, Egbert went to Iona and persuaded the brethren there to accept the Roman-Byzantine paschalion.

St. Boisil's relics were translated to Durham in the eleventh century. He is commemorated on July 7.

Holy Fathers Eata and Boisil, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*; Simeon of Durham, *History of the Church of Durham*; David Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 44-45, 116; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 342, 520; Christopher Jobson, "Saint Eata", Greek Orthodox Church of the 318 Holy Fathers, Atcham, https://www.shrewsburyorthodox.com/about-us/local-

saints/saint-eata/?fbclid=IwAR0xYoD7DEVd03iGu6WYzvZiQw-7HAPb5JWxV1hzQdJOloX6_s1upL9IsvI)

33. SAINT EBBA, ABBESS OF COLDINGHAM

Our holy Mother Ebba was the daughter of King Ethelfrith of Northumbria, sister of the Martyr-King Oswald and half-sister of King Oswy. On her father's death in 616, when the Martyr-King Edwin conquered Northumbria, she fled to Scotland with her brother. King Ednan of the Scots offered to marry her, but she decided instead to be tonsured as a nun by St. Finan, bishop of Lindisfarne. Then her brother King Oswy helped her to found a convent in Durham, on the river Derwent, at a place that is still called Ebchester in her honour. Later she became abbess of a double monastery at Coldingham, Berwickshire, where there were two distinct communities, one for men and one for women. Her reputation for sanctity spread far and wide, and in 672, when St. Etheldreda, Ebba's niece, separated from her husband, King Edfrith, she became a nun under Ebba.

St. Ebba was famous for her wisdom. Once King Egfrith visited the monastery with his second wife Ermenburga, who was then seized with a sudden illness. St. Ebba interpreted this as punishment for the imprisonment of St. Wilfrid by the king, his refusal to accept the decision of the Synod of Whitby in 664 concerning the Roman-Byzantine Paschalion, and the theft of St. Wilfrid's relics and reliquaries by Ermenburga. When Egrith released St. Wilfrid, and Ermenburga restored the relics, she soon recovered.

Once the priest Adomnan had a vision concerning the future of St. Ebba's monastery. He prophesied that the time was soon coming when the whole monastery would be consumed by fire. When Ebba heard this, she asked the priest to describe his vision to her. He replied:

"Being busy one night lately in watching and singing psalms, I on a sudden saw a person unknown standing by me, and since I was startled at his presence, he bade me not to fear, and speaking to me a familiar manner,

"'You do well,' he said, 'in that you spend this night-time of rest, not in giving yourself up to sleep, but in watching and prayer.'

"I answered: 'I know I have great need of wholesome watching, and earnest praying to our Lord to pardon my transgressions.'

"'You are right,' he replied, 'for you and many more do need to redeem their sins by good works, and when they cease from labouring about temporal affairs, then to labour the more eagerly for the desire of heavenly goods. But this very few do. For I have now visited the whole of this monastery regularly, and have looked into every one's chambers and beds, and found none of them except yourself busy about the car of his soul, but all of them, both men and women, either indulge themselves in slothful sleep, or are awake in order to commit sin; for even the cells

that were built for praying or reading are now converted into places of feasting, drinking, talking and other delights. The very virgins dedicated to God, laying aside the respect due to their profession, whenever they are at leisure, apply themselves to weaving fine garments, either to use in adorning themselves like brides, to the danger of their condition, or to gain the friendship of strange men. For this reason a heavy judgement from heaven is deservedly about to fall on this place and its inhabitants by devouring fire.'"

The abbess said: "Why did you not sooner acquaint me with what you knew?"

He answered: "I was afraid to do it, out of respect for you, lest you should be too afflicted. Yet you may have this comfort, that the calamity will not happen in your lifetime."

When this vision was made known, the nuns corrected themselves out of fear for a few days. Moreover, at the abbess's request, the famous St. Cuthbert, bishop of Lindisfarne, visited the monastery for a few days and "confirmed, by his life and conversation, the way of truth which he taught". However, after the abbess's death on August 25, 683, the nuns returned to their former evil ways; and three years later, the monastery was burned to the ground.

Miracles were wrought through St. Ebba's intercession, and it is recorded that she appeared to Christians after her death.

St. Ebba's relics were divided between Coldingham and Durham cathedral. However, they disappeared at the Reformation. She is commemorated on August 25.

Holy Mother Ebba, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, IV, 19, 25; *Life of St. Cuthbert*, 10; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 116-117; J.H. Newman, *The Lives of the English Saints*, London, 1901, volume 4, pp. 271-285; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 518-519)

34. SAINT EDBURGA, ABBESS OF REPTON

The tenth-century *Resting Place of the Saints* records St. Edburga as "resting at Southwell-on-Trent." She is probably to be identified with the Edburga, abbess of Repton, who is mentioned in Felix's *Life of St. Guthlac.* She lived around the year 700.

Holy Mother Edburga, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Felix, *Life of St. Guthlac*; David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 128; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 265, 296)

35. SAINT EDBURGA, NUN OF WINCHESTER

Our holy Mother Edburga was born late in the ninth or early in the tenth century, being the daughter of King Edward the Elder of England and his third wife Eadgifu, and the grand-daughter of King Alfred the Great and his wife Ealswythe.

When she was still a girl, her father showed her a couch on which were laid a chalice and Gospels on one side, and bracelets and necklaces on the other. When asked which she preferred, she turned her back on the worldly baubles and chose the holy things. Her father rejoiced, and blessed her to become a nun at the convent of the Mother of God in Winchester known as Nunnaminster, which her grandmother had founded and which her father had completed. So the saint was handed over to Abbess Aethelthryth to be educated in the monastic life and the Holy Scriptures.

Once the prioress found one of her nuns reading alone, which was against the monastic rule. She began beating the offender, but was then shocked to see that it was the king's daughter, Edburga. She prostrated herself at the saint's feet, asking her forgiveness. But then the saint, not wishing to be made an exception to the monastic rule because of her birth, herself prostrated herself at the other's feet.

Edburga had the custom of secretly cleaning the other nuns' shoes at night. The nuns wondered who it was, and eventually one discovered that it was the saint's work. She was brought before the monastic community, who said to her: "It is unseemly for a royal child to bow her neck to such humble service and to set about the work of a common slave; it is harmful to the dignity of her illustrious birth."

A little later, King Edward came to Winchester and discreetly asked about his daughter's progress. The nuns praised her, but were afraid to mention this incident: "Still they wavered and trembled, fearing to relate that deed which was detestable to all, lest they be struck down by the king's anger." But the king ordered them to say what was on their minds. They were relieved to learn that he was not at all upset by his daughter's humility, but rather encouraged it.

Once the community was in considerable hardship and had very little to eat. The nuns asked Edburga to intercede with her father. Now it happened that two soldiers, Alla and Muluca, had disgraced themselves brawling over an estate called Canaga – probably All Cannings in Wiltshire. A council decreed that the soldiers should be punished by the forfeiture of this property to the king. The nuns told Edburga that this estate perfectly suited their needs, so Edburga agreed to bring the subject up with her father. An opportunity arose when the king made another visit to Nunnaminster and asked his daughter to sing an Alleluia. She at first refused out of shyness, but when the king offered her a reward if she sang, she did

not refuse his request. And afterwards she asked her father to give the monastery the estate of All Cannings. Her father willingly agreed to give the estate to the monastery in perpetuity.

St. Edburga was an exemplary nun in all ways. She was also very given to almsgiving to the poor. And the Lord granted her the gift of healing.

Thus there was a blind woman in the province who was told during a nocturnal vision that if she put water that Edburga had used in washing her hands on her eyes, she would be healed. So she went to the monastery and told the nuns about her vision. They gave her water from the hands of the saint, and she immediately recovered her sight.

According to one ancient source, thirty-one years elapsed between the death of King Alfred and the death of St. Edburga. If King Alfred died in 901, as this source suggests, then St. Edburga would have died in 932.

St. Edburga is commemorated on June 15 and July 18. She is sometimes confused with another Edburga, who founded a monastery in the middle of the seventh century at Aylesbury. Some relics of hers were transferred to Pershore in 972.

Holy Mother Edburga, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Bodleian Library MS 451; Osbert of Clare, *Vita Edburge*; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, II, 78; Susan J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge University Press; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 118; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 13, 80)

36. SAINT EDGAR "THE PEACEABLE", KING OF ENGLAND

Our holy Father Edgar was born in 943, the son of King Edmund and the grandson of St. Elgiva. He succeeded to the throne after the death of his brother Edwy in 959, having already been elected king of Mercia and Northumbria in 957. His early life was marred by sin, which is why St. Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury did not allow him to wear his crown from the beginning of his reign until he was thirty years old. Accepting this penance with humility, St. Edgar was crowned for a second time in Bath Abbey in 973, when he accepted the allegiance of rulers in Wales, Scotland and the Danelaw.

St. Edgar's reign marked the peak of the English Orthodox monarchy. The king worked very closely with the Church and helped in the foundation of about thirty monasteries. He passed just laws, and maintained the peace, hence his name: "Edgar the Peaceable".

St. Edgar died in 975, and was buried at Glastonbury. In 1052, when his tomb was opened, his body was found to be incorrupt by Abbot Ailward of Glastonbury. Moreover, the irreverence with which the holy body was handled indicated how irreverently his son, St. Edward the Martyr, was soon to be treated.

"For when," writes William of Malmesbury, "the receptacle which he had prepared seemed too small to admit the body, he profaned the royal corpse by cutting it. When the blood immediately gushed out in torrents, shaking the hearts of the bystanders with horror. In consequence his royal remains were placed upon the altar in a shrine, which he had himself given to this church, with the head of St. Apollinaris and the relics of the Martyr Vincent; which, having purchased at great price, he had added to the beauty of the house of God. The violator of the sacred body presently became distracted; and, not long after, as he was going out of the church, he met his death by a broken neck. But the display of royal authority did not cease with that: it proceeded further, a blind lunatic being cured there…"

St. Edgar is commemorated on July 8.

Holy Father Edgar, pray to God for us!

(Sources: William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum, Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*; *Lives* of several tenth-century saints; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 119-120)

37. SAINTS EDITH AND EDITH OF POLEWORTH

Our holy mother Edith was the daughter of King Egbert of Wessex, the sister of King Ethelwulf of Wessex, and the aunt of King Alfred the Great. Polesworth was one of two towns or estates granted by Ethelwulf to St. Modwenna for the founding of monasteries. According to another source, St. Modwenna received land at Polesworth from King Egbert of Wessex in 827. Edith became the first abbess. She died on March 15, 871.

Our holy Mother Edith was the eldest daughter of King Edward the Elder and Queen Egwena, and sister of St. Edburga of Winchester and King Athelstan. In 925, according to Roger of Wendover, King Athelstan joined his sister in marriage to the Danish King Sihtric (or Sigfric) of Northumbria, who then converted to Christianity for the love of the beautiful Edith. However, not long after he abandoned both Edith and Christianity and returned to the worship of the idols, dying one year later in apostasy.

Edith then became abbess of Polesworth, succeeding the earlier St. Edith. "She preserved her chastity, remained strong in good works to the end of her life, at Polesworth, in fasts and vigils, in prayers and in zeal for almsgiving. She departed after the passage of a praiseworthy life from this world on 15 July, at the same place, where to this day Divine miracles do not cease to be performed."

St. Edith built a monastery at Tamworth, and died there.

Holy Mothers Edith and Edith, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*; Donald Attwater, *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints*, London: Penguin, 1965, p. 109; Agnes Dunbar, *A Dictionary of Saintly Women,* 1904, http://www.earlybritishkingdoms.com/adversaries/bios/edithtamworth.html; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 315-316)

38. SAINT EDITH, NUN OF WILTON

Our holy Mother Edith was born in the tenth century in Kemsing, Kent, of an illicit union between King Edgar and the daughter of an earl of royal blood, Wulfrida. Edgar wished to make Wulfrida his queen, but she fled to the convent of Wilton, where she received the monastic tonsure from St. Ethelwold, bishop of Winchester.

Soon Wulfrida came to excel in virtue, and she was chosen to be the spiritual mother of the convent. Edith was brought up in the convent under her mother's supervision, and at length she, too, was tonsured with her father's consent, at the age of 15. In the convent she learned writing, drawing, sewing and embroidery, and was taught by the two foreign chaplains, Radbod of Rheims and Benno of Trèves. She was also influenced by the holy example of her namesake and paternal aunt, Edith of Polesworth, and by her grandmother, St. Elgiva.

St. Edith was distinguished by her abstinence, even on feastdays, and by her love for the poor, the lepers, the blind and the maimed. She dressed in beautiful clothes, but wore a hairshirt next to her skin. Not realizing this secret asceticism, St. Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, once said to her: "My daughter, it is not with such vestments that one goes to the bridal chamber of Christ. Nor does the Heavenly Bridegroom delight in the external beautifying of the body." She replied: "Believe me, Father, with God's help the mind is no worse under this covering than under a goatskin. I have my Lord Who looks not so much at my clothes as at my mind." The man of God sensed the grace in her words, and did not further reproach her.

Now a serving-woman once left a half-extinguished candle in a chest full of the virgin's clothes. Having bolted the chest, she went away. Soon the smouldering candle generated a dangerous fire in the bedroom, and the wall caught fire. It was night and everyone was asleep; but the unsleeping Providence of God roused the sisters, who came running and tried to break open the chest. They pulled out the burning clothes and extinguished the flames. But when they examined the clothes carefully, they were astonished to see that they were all completely untouched. All this time Edith had been tranquil, her mind fixed on Christ. The scorched chest was kept in the monastery as a witness to the miracle.

Wherever Edith went, the Cross of Christ was her companion. She made the sign of the Cross on her forehead and chest before every work and while travelling. Once, as she was giving food to the poor, as was her custom, a boy ran up from the side and asked for alms. She gave them to him, making the sign of the Cross at the same time. Immediately the boy vanished into thin air – a demonic phantom destroyed by the power of the Cross.

When King Edgar died in 975, and Edith's half-brother Edward ascended the throne, she had a vision in which she saw the young king's right eye fall out. Relating this to the sisters, she said: "It seems to me that this portends the death of my brother." And so it turned out.

After the martyrdom of her brother, some nobles wanted to make her queen. But she refused…

Although she was the daughter of a king, St. Edith refused all honours, preferring to serve the sisters in the most humble capacities, like Martha. She was also noted for her familiarity with wild animals.

Edith had a great devotion to St. Dionysius the Areopagite, and had a wooden church built in his name adjoining the main church of the monastery. It had three entrances with the Cross inscribed over each. The interior was covered by multi-coloured frescoes painted by the chaplain Benno. When the church was completed, Edith invited St. Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury, to consecrate it. During his visit, he saw the holy virgin extend the thumb and two fingers of her right hand to make the sign of the Cross. Delighted by this, he took her right hand and said: "May this thumb never perish!"

A little later, during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, the holy man broke into tears. When the deacon asked him why he was weeping, he said: "This soul beloved of God, this heavenly jewel, will be taken from this miserable life and earthly filth to the land of the saints. Nor is this shameful world worthy of such a great light. Forty-three days from now this brilliant star will depart from us. Behold how the lights of the saints are taken from this our prison while we sit in the darkness and shadow of death. Her immature age condemns our slothful senility, and while we sleep, she enters into the marriage with her lamp full of oil, and takes the beauty of the crown before us. Now you are going to a better age, O blessed citizen of the Heavenly Jerusalem Edith, and you are leaving thy father in sadness, O daughter." Then he urged the deacon to keep silent about what he had said. After the service he told Edith to prepare to meet Christ with her lamp burning with oil and without looking at any worldly things; for Christ was calling her, and soon she would leave this world. At length, having given her his blessing, he left; and the appointed day drew near.

And so, on the third day after the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, after receiving the Body and Blood of Christ from the hands of St. Dunstan, the holy Edith commended her soul into the hands of the Lord. She reposed in the church of St. Dionysius. Meanwhile, a certain sister ran into the main monastery from the church saying that she had heard what seemed to be great multitude chanting psalms. And as she was listening, someone with a beautiful face and shining clothes came up to her and said: "Don't come closer, for the holy angels are about

to take the girl Goda [a version of Edith's Saxon name, 'Ead-gythe'] to the eternal joys, so that, accompanied by this melody of the heavenly hosts, she may enter into the courts of eternal joy."

Thus in the twenty-third year of her life, on September 16, 984, St. Edith went to Christ. And St. Dunstan buried her in the church of St. Dionysius, which she had herself constructed, and of which she had once said: "This is the place of my rest," weeping all the while. Thousands of paupers were fed, and everywhere funeral liturgies were celebrated at the request of her mother. Moreover, she built a guest-house in the yard of the monastery where twelve paupers were fed daily, a custom initiated by Edith herself.

On the thirtieth day after her repose, the saint appeared to her mother, radiant and joyful, and said that she had been accepted by her King into everlasting glory. "Satan accused me in the presence of my Lord," she said, "but by the prayers of the holy apostles I crushed his head, and by the Cross of the Lord Jesus I overthrew him and trampled on him."

On that same day there was born a little girl, whose parents had asked Edith before her death to receive her from the holy font. She said: "I shall receive her in the manner that is pleasing to God." But since Edith was born into the heavenly world before this girl into the earthly, she was brought into the church without a sponsor, and was baptized by St. Alphege, St. Ethelwold's successor in the see of Winchester. Then, in accordance with the custom of the Church, he gave her a candle, saying: "Receive this light, with which you will enter into the marriage of the Lord." Suddenly, as if Edith were holding her little hand, she took the candle and held it. The man of God understood this to be a prophecy of her election by God, and immediately asked the parents: "Bring this girl up as one who is betrothed to God alone, and after she has been weaned bring her to the monastery."

This girl was called Brihtgiva, and later became abbess of St. Edith's monastery at Wilton, reposing in holiness in 1065.

Then St. Edith began to show by signs and wonders that she was a citizen of the heavens and was accessible to the prayers of supplicants.

Now her tomb was covered with a shining white pall. One day, a woman who had been left alone there took a small part of this pall, wrapped it round her shin-bone and stole away. But then a Divine shackle fettered the fugitive and fixed her leg to the ground so that she could not cross the threshold with her loot. She struggled for a long time in this condition until the sacristan came and ordered her to leave. But the guilty woman remained rooted to the spot, deathly white, trembling and groaning. Then, however, she took the pall from her leg and handed it back, saying: "This bound me." Immediately she was able to walk again and left.

Many witnessed this miracle and praised God. And Edith's mother was comforted in her distress.

Three years after her repose, St. Edith appeared to St. Dunstan and said: "The Lord in remembrance of His mercies has taken me up, and it has pleased His ineffable goodness that for the salvation of the faithful I should be honoured among men on earth in the same way that He has caused me to be honoured among the angels in heaven. So go to Wilton in obedience to the Divine command, and take up my body from the earth. Doubt not, and do not think that you are being deluded by some phantom; for this will be a sign of the truth of my words: except for those members of my body which I abused through childish frivolity, such as my eyes, hands and feet, you will find the rest of my body incorrupt. For I never knew lust or gluttony. And the thumb of my right hand, with which I used to make the sign of the Cross assiduously, you will also find incorrupt, so that the mercy of the Lord may appear in the part that has been preserved, and His Fatherly correction in the part that has been consumed." Dunstan set off for Wilton, and when he was spending the night nearby at Sarum, he was taken in a vision to the tomb of the holy virgin, where lo! He clearly saw St. Dionysius standing at the altar together with the virgin Edith, resplendent in dazzling light. She then said to Dionysius: "You know, O father, what is pleasing to God in regard to me. Therefore, as the interpreter of the Divine counsel, and legate of the Divine will, tell this man who has come by what faith and authority I have invited him here." St. Dionysius said: "Give heed, brother, to the vision you have just seen. What this beloved lady has just said is true. For she who deserved to be crowned among the citizens of heaven is worthy of the veneration of those on earth. Worthy of honour is this body, this temple of virginal chastity, in which the Lord and King of glory, the Lover of chastity, reigned. Such veneration which is pleasing to Christ is necessary for mortals."

Therefore the holy body was raised from the earth on November 3, 987, and everything was found as had been foretold.

Once a certain Glastonbury monk named Edulph was cutting away from the holy body a piece of cloth which had been carelessly wrinkled. At the same time he struck the holy body with his scissors. Immediately blood gushed out as if from a cut vein, and poured onto the clothes and pavement. The rash brother was terrified, and, abandoning the scissors as well as the holy body, he fell on his face confessing his crime and weeping tears of repentance. When he rose the blood had completely disappeared…

Again, a sister was trying to cut away a part of the ribbon which was on the holy head. But she was prevented from doing this in a wonderful way. For the head raised itself as if alive and gave her a threatening look.

Some clerics from Brittany came to Wilton bearing with them the relics of St. Iwi, the hierodeacon and disciple of St. Cuthbert, who had spent the last years of his life in Brittany. They placed them with honour on the monastery's altar. But when they wanted to leave, the holy relics stuck to the altar and could not be moved by any means. The foreigners wept, cried, rent their clothes and tore their hair, but to no avail. At length, Abbess Wulfrid consoled them with a gift of 2000 solidi, and they went sadly home.

A certain man who had stolen a piece of land belonging to St. Edith was apparently taken by sudden death without repentance. A little later he sat up in his coffin and said: "Help me, my friends, help me, all of you God's faithful. Behold the intolerable wrath of St. Edith prevents this unhappy soul of mine from entering any part of heaven or earth. Nowhere does she allow the invader of her property to abide, neither to remain in this body nor to die." But when the land that he had stolen was restored, he immediately breathed out his spirit.

Once King Canute was at Wilton for the feast of Pentecost. As he was eating, he kept laughing, declaring that he did not believe that Edith was a saint in view of the lustful habits of her father. Archbishop Ethelnoth contradicted him, and immediately opened the tomb of the holy virgin. And she, sitting up in the coffin, was seen to attack the abusive king. Then he, petrified, fell to the earth as if dead. At length, recovering his breath, he blushed and asked forgiveness for his rudeness; and from that moment he held the saint in great honour.

Once the same king was in trouble at sea. When he called on the name of St. Edith, the storm was suddenly stilled and he arrived safely at his chosen port. A similar miracle happened to Archbishop Aldred of York when he was sailing on the Adriatic Sea. Having called upon her name, she appeared to him visibly and said: "I am Edith". Immediately the sea became calm.

St. Edith is commemorated on September 16 and November 3.

Holy Mother Edith, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Goscelin, *Life of St. Edith, Patrologia Latina*, Paris, 1850, vol. 155, pp. 111-116; A. Wilmart, "La Légende de Ste. Edith en Prose et Vers pars le Moine Goscelin", *Analecta Bollandiana*, 1938, LVI, pp. 5-101, 265-307; Donald Attwater, *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints*, London: Penguin, 1965, p. 109; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 120; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 44, 255, 274; Fr. Richard Whinder, "St. Edith of Kemsing", *Catholic Life,* , May, 2008, pp. 38-39)

39. SAINT EDMUND, MARTYR-KING OF EAST ANGLIA
and those with him

Early Years

St. Edmund, one of the greatest and most famous of the British saints, lived and suffered during the ninth century, one of the most tragic and difficult moments of British history, when the pagan Danes were killing and destroying over a large area of the British Isles. The problems of the English were made worse by the fact that there was no unity among them, and instead of being united into one powerful force to repel the invaders they were divided into seven kingdoms, which were not always united even within themselves. No part of the country was more exposed to the pagan attacks than the small kingdom of East Anglia, and the old King Offa of East Anglia resolved to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to pray for the forgiveness of his sins and the safety of his kingdom.

On the way, he visited his cousin Alcmund, who, on being exiled from East Anglia after the death of the Martyr-King Ethelbert (+May 20, 793), had been entrusted with the kingdom of Old Saxony by the Emperor Charlemagne. Alcmund had married a German princess named Siwara, and with her often besought the Lord to give him a numerous and saintly family. In answer to his prayer, an angel appeared to him and told him to undertake a pilgrimage to the tombs of the apostles in Rome, where God would grant his petition.

During this pilgrimage, while the king was one day conversing with his hostess, a noble and pious Roman woman, she noticed on his breast a brilliant sun, whose rays, darting to all four points of the compass, threw a miraculous light on all around. Filled with the spirit of prophecy, she declared that from him would come a son whose fame, like the sun, would illumine the four quarters of the world and bring many to Christ. A few months later, after returning to North Hamburg, the capital of Old Saxony, Alcmund's wife Siwara bore him his second son, Edmund.

Now when King Offa came to Saxony, Edmund was appointed to accompany him; and the old king was immediately struck by the beauty, both physical and spiritual, of the young prince, and by the zeal of his service. He applied to him the words of Solomon: "Hast thou seen a man swift in his work? He shall stand before kings and shall not be in obscurity" (Proverbs 22.29).

Then in the presence of the whole court he embraced him and, putting a ring on his finger, said: "My most beloved son Edmund, accept this memento of our kinship and mutual love. Remember me as one grateful for your service, for which with God's permission I hope to leave you a paternal inheritance." Edmund's father hastened to explain to him the significance of this ceremony: was he prepared to accept King Offa as his adoptive father in place of his natural father? On Edmund's

acceptance, Offa tearfully drew from his finger his ring - in fact, it was a coronation ring - and said: "Son Edmund, observe closely this ring, notice its design and seal. If, when I am far away, I intimate to you by this token my wish and desire, do you without delay execute my order. As the noble assembly here bears witness, I intend to regard you as my most beloved son and heir."

Then Offa continued on his pilgrimage. Having arrived in the Holy Land and venerated the Holy Places, he set out on his return journey via Constantinople. But as he was sailing through the Hellespont, he fell ill; so, disembarking at the monastery of St. George, he received the Holy Mysteries and prepared for death. His last act was to entrust his kingdom of East Anglia to Edmund, ordering his nobles to take his ring to Saxony as a token of his will. Then he reposed in peace and was buried in St. George's Bay on the Hellespont in the year 854.

And so, in his fourteenth year, St. Edmund set sail with a retinue of nobles for the promised kingdom which he had never seen before. They landed at what is now called St. Edmund's Head near Hunstanton in Norfolk. Disembarking in a dry river-bed, the king prostrated on the ground and prayed to God to bless his coming and make it profitable for the land and its people. As the saint rose and mounted his horse, twelve springs of sweet, clear water gushed out of the earth, which worked many miracles of healing for the sick. From that hour the soil of that region, which before had been sandy and barren, bore the richest crops in all Eastern England.

The saint then proceeded to Attleborough, Offa's former capital, and staked his claim to the throne. On November 5, 855, he was in Winchester, attending a council convened by King Ethelwulf of Wessex (Southern England) to provide a charter of immunities for the English Church. Then he returned to Attleborough, where on Christmas Day he was proclaimed sovereign of the people of Norfolk (the northern half of East Anglia) by Humbert, Bishop of Elmham.

For the next year the king stayed quietly in Norfolk, learning the psalms of David under the guidance of Bishop Humbert. Eventually the people of Suffolk (the southern half of East Anglia) decided to accept him as their king, and on Christmas Day, 856 he was anointed and crowned king of the whole of East Anglia. The church in Bures, Suffolk, where the coronation took place, survives to the present day.

St. Edmund was fair-haired, tall, well-built, with a natural majesty of bearing. By his piety and chastity he won the respect of all the Christians. He was a defender of the Church, a protector of orphans and widows, and a supporter of the poor. No man sought for justice from him and failed to get redress, and no innocent pleaded in vain for mercy. It is said that under his strong and just rule a boy could drive a mule from Lynn to Sudbury, or from Thetford to Yarmouth, and no one would dare to molest him.

The Great Army

In 865 the pagan Danes, led by the three brothers Hinguar, Healfdene and Hubba, again invaded England, bent on revenge for the death of their father Ragnar Lodbrog at the hands of the English King Alle of Northumbria. Hinguar carried with him the famous standard of the Raven, which had been woven by the three daughters of Lodbrog for their three brothers. Magical spells had been cast during the weaving, so that when the bird flapped its wings in the wind, it was believed to betoken victory, while when it hung motionless, it betokened defeat. St. Edmund went out to meet the Danes under another banner, which showed Adam and Eve eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and above them the Lamb of God slain to wash away their sins.

Edmund defeated the enemy in several skirmishes, showing subtlety no less than valour. Thus he was once surprised by the enemy within one of his camps with no avenue of escape. The siege was so long that both besiegers and besieged began to suffer from famine. But Edmund determined that the enemy should not learn about his men's suffering, which might persuade them to disband their own troops. So he ordered a fatted bull which had been fed with good wheat to be set loose outside the enclosure. The Danes seized it and killed it. And when they opened its stomach and found fresh wheat inside, they concluded that the English had no lack of provisions. So they abandoned the siege and split up into foraging parties. Edmund then followed them stealthily, and killed large numbers of them.

On another occasion Edmund and his men were besieged inside the almost impregnable fortress of Framingham. However, Hinguar captured an old and decrepit man by the name of Sathonius whom the saint had been feeding and accommodating at his own expense in the castle. By means of a bribe, the old man was induced to betray to Hinguar a weak spot in the castle walls, which he himself had helped to build in his youth. Advancing on the castle at this point, Hinguar caught the English by surprise. Edmund jumped onto his swiftest charger and galloped out through the open gates. Some of the Danes saw him, but did not suspect who he was and galloped after him, hoping to get some information about the king. But Edmund, like St. Athanasius the Great on a similar occasion, turned to them and said: "Go back as fast as you can, for, when I was in the castle, the king whom you seek was there also." Turning back, they discovered that the king had fooled them. Then St. Edmund gathered his forces and fell upon the baffled Danes as they were retreating.

The Danes now made peace with Edmund and headed north to Northumbria (North-Eastern England), arriving in York on November 1, 866. The English Kings Osbert and Alle, who had been fighting each other up to that moment, now joined forces and marched on York, and after destroying the city walls they entered the city on March 21, 867. However, the resultant battle within the city was disastrous

for the English: both kings and eight of the leading noblemen were killed. The Danes then ravaged the whole of Northumbria as far as the River Tyne before installing an Englishman named Egbert as puppet-king of the region under their power.

This was only "the beginning of sorrows" for the English. At the end of the year the Danish "Great Army" moved south into Mercia (Central England) and took the city of Nottingham. In answer to King Burhred of Mercia's appeal for help, King Ethelred of Wessex, his younger brother Alfred (the future King of England) and St. Edmund came to meet him outside the walls of Nottingham. However, the Danes avoided a battle with the English kings outside Nottingham, so peace terms were concluded. In exchange for giving up Nottingham, the Great Army was allowed to retreat back into Northumbria.

Now began a horrific despoliation of the Christian inheritance of the whole of Eastern England. In the north, St. Ebba's monastery at Coldingham was burned down with the nuns inside after they had all, with **Abbess Ebba** giving them the lead, cut off their noses and upper lips to deter the attackers from raping them. Tynemouth, Wearmouth, Jarrow, Whitby and other famous monasteries were destroyed; and in Eastern Mercia Bardney and Crowland were gutted.

When the news of the Great Army's approach reached **Abbot Theodore** of Crowland, he sent away all the able-bodied men and buried the church valuables. Then, as the flames of nearby Kesteven lit up the sky, he calmly vested himself for the Divine Liturgy, which he celebrated with the assistance of **Deacon Alfget, Subdeacon Savin and Monks Ethelred and Wulric**. Hardly had they finished when the Danish leader Oscytel burst in, beheaded the abbot, tortured the elder monks and killed the boys – there were 70 martyrs in all - before setting fire to the monastery. This took place on August 26, 869. S

“Theodore’s skull,” writes Nick Smith, “complete with the sword cut that killed him, is now kept in Parvise Chapel [in Crowland] above the porch, inaccessible to casual visitors. It was stolen in 1982, and returned anonymously 17 years later with a ‘crude note of apology’ according to the church guide.”

Then it was the turn of the fenland monasteries Thorney, Peterborough, Ramsey and Ely. At Peterborough Hinguar was struck by a stone; so his brother Hubba with his own hand slaughtered **Abbot Hedda and 84 monks** on one stone to avenge his injury. At Ely a Dane took hold of the pall which covered the incorrupt body of St. Etheldreda (+June 23, 679) and struck the marble of the tomb with his battle-axe. But a splinter flew back from off the ground and entered the striker's eye, and he fell dead. At this the others left the tombs of the other saints, which they were thinking of violating, and fled.

Probably also at this time was killed St. Herefrith of Louth, the last bishop of

Lindsey, whose relics were translated to Thorney.

Another saint met the invaders in a different way. The body of St. Werburga (+3 February, c. 700) had been preserved incorrupt at Chester right up to the coming of the Danes. But when they approached the city, the body suddenly disintegrated...

Martyrdom

While Hubba with 10,000 men was sacking Ely and Soham, Hinguar pressed eastwards into East Anglia. On Newmarket Heath he encountered Alderman Ulfcetyl defending two or three earthworks later known as "Holy Edmund's Fortifications". The English were overwhelmed and slaughtered to a man. Then the host proceeded to the capital, Thetford, which they captured amidst terrible scenes of rape and butchery. The whole population was killed, and only King Edmund with a small army survived to face the Danes…

Hinguar then sent a messenger to Edmund, saying: "Hinguar our king, brave and victorious by sea and by land, has subdued many nations and has now landed suddenly here with his host. Now he orders you to divide your hidden treasure and the wealth of your ancestors with him quickly. And if you want to live, you can be his under-king, because you do not have the power to resist him."

Edmund summoned Bishop Humbert and discussed with him how he should answer Hinguar. The bishop, fearful because of the disaster at Thetford and the threat to the king's life, counselled him to submit to whatever Hinguar demanded. Edmund replied: "O bishop! This wretched nation is humiliated, and I would rather die in battle against him who is trying to possess the people's land." Then the bishop said: "Alas, dear king, your people lie slaughtered, and you do not have the forces to fight. And these pirates will come and bind you alive, unless you save your life by fleeing, or by submitting to him in this way." The king replied: "What I want and desire with all my heart is that I should not be left alone when my beloved thanes with their wives and children have been suddenly killed by these pirates. It was never my custom to flee, and I would rather die for my country if I have to. And Almighty God knows that I will never renounce His worship, nor His true love, in life or in death."

Then he turned to Hinguar's messenger and said: "You would certainly deserve to die right now, but I will not dirty my clean hands in your filthy blood, for I follow Christ, Who set us this example. And I will gladly be killed by you if God so ordains it. Go quickly now and tell your savage lord: 'Edmund will never while living submit in this land to the pagan war-lord Hinguar, unless he first submit in this land to Christ the Saviour in faith.'"

Then Edmund marched with his men to Thetford. The battle raged for seven

hours on the plain between Melford and Catford bridges; and finally Hinguar and his men retreated to their entrenched camp. Edmund was the victor, but at a terrible cost; and as he marched back to Hoxne he resolved to give himself up rather than continue the blood carnage.

Shortly after his arrival in Hoxne, the news came of a fresh Danish inroad into the country. Hubba had completed his destruction of Ely and Soham, and had now set out with 10,000 more men to help his brother complete the conquest of East Anglia. Resistance was now hopeless, and Edmund's only thought was how to preserve his country from further bloodshed and preserve in it the Christian faith. Bishop Humbert again counselled flight, if only in the hope that he might return to re–conquer the land for Christ. But Edmund knew that the enemy would the more ruthlessly put to sword any able-bodied man who might assist in his restoration. Nor would that be enough: Hinguar entertained a personal hatred of the king which would be satisfied only by his being captured alive… So the saint turned to Humbert and said: "O Bishop Humbert, my father, it is necessary that I alone should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish (cf. John 12.50)."

Then, having dismissed his men and laid aside his arms, he entered the church and prostrated himself in front of the altar, praying for strength for his feat of martyrdom for Christ and his suffering people.

Having marched up to the town and surrounded it, Hinguar sent his men into the church with orders to touch no one except the king. They seized the king, bound him, and beat him with cudgels while insulting him continually. Then they tied him to a tree and flogged him with whips for a long time. Meanwhile the king called unceasingly on the name of Christ. This infuriated the pagans, and they now shot at him with arrows until he was entirely covered with them, like the holy Martyr Sebastian. When Hinguar saw that the holy king would not renounce Christ, he ordered him to be beheaded. And so they dragged him, still calling on Christ, to the place of slaughter and there beheaded him.

Then **Bishop Humbert**, too, was led into the arena and beheaded.

This took place on November 20, 869, when Edmund had reigned for fifteen years and was twenty-nine years old.

The Translation of the Body

The pagans returned to their ships, having thrown the head of St. Edmund into dense brambles so that it would be left unburied. Then the local inhabitants came and found the headless body, but could not find the head. A man who had been a witness of the martyrdom said that he thought that they had hidden the head somewhere in the wood. So a search-party was organized which scoured the

bushes and brambles. And as they were calling to each other, they head answered "Here! Here! Here!", until they all came to the place where the head lay. And there they saw it lying between the two paws of a grey wolf, who, while not daring to harm it himself, had been protecting it from the other wild beasts. Thanking God Almighty for His miracles, the people took the head and carried it back to the town. The wolf followed them as if he were tame, and then, having seen it into the town, returned to the wood. The people joined the head back to the body, and then buried it as best they could, hastily erecting a wooden chapel over it…

Within twenty years coins were being minted depicting Edmund as a saint.

One night, a blind man and a boy who was leading him were walking through the woods near Hoxne. Not seeing any house nearby, they resolved to stay the night in what was in fact the wooden chapel constructed over St. Edmund's grave. Upon entering, they stumbled across the martyr's grave; but, though terrified at first, they decided not to leave but to stay in the chapel, using the grave as a pillow for the night. Hardly had they closed their eyes, when a column of light suddenly illumined the whole place. The boy woke up his master in fear. "Alas! Alas!" he cried, "our lodging is on fire!" But the blind man calmed him down, assuring him that their host would not let them come to harm. And indeed, at dawn they discovered that through St. Edmund's prayers the blind man could now see.

The news of this miracle spread throughout East Anglia, and the people resolved to translate the body of their saint to a safer and more honourable shrine. They chose the town of Bedricsworth whose church and monastery, founded by St. Sigebert in the seventh century, had been destroyed by the Danes, but some of whose priests still survived. In 903, having rebuilt the church, Bishop Theodred of Elmham and all the clergy of East Anglia translated the holy body with great ceremony into its new shrine. The town was renamed Bury St Edmunds in the saint's honour.

"Then there was a great miracle," wrote Abbot Aelfric in about the year 1000, "in that he was just as whole as if he were alive, with unblemished body; and his neck, which was previously cut through, was healed, and there was, as it were, a red silken threat about his neck as an indication to men of how he was slain. Likewise the wounds which the savage heathens had made in his body with repeated missiles were healed by the heavenly God. And he lies incorrupt thus to this present day, awaiting resurrection and the eternal glory. His body, which lies here undecayed, proclaims to us that he lived here in the world without fornication, and journeyed to Christ with a pure life. A certain widow called Oswyn lived in prayer and fasting at the saint's tomb for many years afterwards; each year [on Holy Thursday] she would cut the hair of the saint and cut his nails, circumspectly, with love, and keep them on the altar in a shrine as relics."

Many miracles continued to be performed at the saint's tomb. At night a column of light was often seen rising above it and illuminating the whole church. Then, in 925, King Athelstan founded a community of four priests and two deacons to look after the shrine, their duties being similar to those of the seven clergy who guarded the shrine of St. Cuthbert.

"Then," continues Abbot Aelfric, "the inhabitants venerated the saint with faith, and Bishop Theodred [the second of the name, called "the Good"] endowed the monastery with gifts of gold and silver in honour of the saint. Then at one time there came wretched thieves, eight in a single night, to the venerable saint; they wanted to steal the treasures which men had brought there, and tried how they could get in by force. One struck at the bolt violently with a hammer; one of the, filed around it with a file; one also dug under the door with a spade; one of them with a ladder wanted to unlock the window. But they laboured in vain and fared miserably, inasmuch as the holy man miraculously bound them, each as he stood, striving with his tool, so that none of them could commit that sinful deed nor move away from there, but they stood thus till morning. Then men marvelled at how the villains hung there, one up a ladder, one bent in digging, and each was bound fast in his labour. Then they were all brought to the bishop, and he ordered them all to be hung on a high gallows. But he was not mindful of how the merciful God spoke through His prophet the following: *Eos qui ducuntur ad mortem eruere ne cesses*, 'Always redeem those whom they lead to death'; and also the holy canons forbid those in orders, both bishops and priests, to be concerned with thieves, for it is not proper that those who are chosen to serve God should be a party to any man's death, if they are the Lord's servants. Then after Bishop Theodred had examined the books, he repented with lamentation that he had appointed so cruel a judgement to those wretched thieves, and regretted it to the end of his life, and earnestly prayed the people to fast with him a whole three days, praying to the Almighty that He would have mercy on him.

"There was in that land a certain man called Leofstan, powerful before the world and foolish before God, who rode to the saint with great arrogance, and insolently ordered them to show whether the holy saint was uncorrupted; but as soon as he saw the saint's body, he immediately went insane and roared savagely and ended miserably by an evil death."

Vengeance on the Pagans

In the year 1013, the Danes under King Swein again invaded England, and the whole country north of Watling Street surrendered to him. London, however, under the leadership of King Ethelred and Earl Thurkill, held out against him for some time. But when Swein turned northwards again, the whole nation accepted him as their undisputed king, and even the Londoners were forced to submit, while the king, the royal family and Bishop Alfhun of London went into exile in Normandy.

At this critical juncture, still more critical than that which faced King Alfred in the winter of 877-878, an English saint again came to the rescue of the Christian people - this time, the holy Martyr-King Edmund.

Since the year 999, the incorrupt body of St. Edmund had been in the care of a monk named Ethelwine. In 1010, relates Abbot Sampson, when the Danes were ravaging East Anglia, St. Edmund's earthly kingdom, the saint appeared to Ethelwine and ordered him to place his body in a casket, put it on a cart and convey it to London. But the clerics were to remain in their places.

At dusk one day, as Ethelwine was proceeding on his way to London, he came to the house of a priest named Edbriht, and asked hospitality for himself and his holy charge. The priest at first refused to give shelter to strangers; but eventually, after people protested, he allowed the monk to sleep in the open air on his land, while not allowing him into his house. So Ethelwine slept under the cart on which the martyr's body lay.

That night, however, a column of light was seen stretching up from the cart to heaven, and during the fourth watch of the night, the cart began to make a noise as if its wheels were turning. Startled by the noise, Ethelwine woke up and understood that the saint wished to move from there. Soon he was on his way, and when he was already some distance from the house, he looked back and saw that it was on fire - a just retribution for the priest's inhumanity.

Later that day, Ethelwine came to the crossing of the river Stratford, three miles from London, and wished to cross over. But part of the bridge had subsided into the river, and the whole structure was unsafe. The Danes threatened from the rear, and there was no other crossing; so Ethelwine resorted to prayer. Suddenly the cart began to move of its own will. The right wheel rolled over what remained of the bridge, while the left wheel passed through the air above the water as if it were dry land. Those who saw the miracle from the other side of the river praised God, and as the holy body approached the outskirts of London a great crowd of monks, clerics and nobles came to meet it. Taking it upon their shoulders, they moved towards the church of St. Paul, singing praises and rejoicing greatly.

Between the Aldgate and the church of St. Paul eighteen people were cured of various maladies through the prayers of the saint. A woman who was confined to her bed with paralysis heard the clamour accompanying the passing of the saint and asked her servants what it signified.

"Don't you know," they said, "that St. Edmund, the king of the East Angles, who was innocently killed for Christ by the unfaithful and impious pagans, has come into this city and has given health to many?"

"Woe is me!" she cried, "that God has not counted me worthy to obtain mercy in his presence. For if I could just touch the edge of his bier, I am confident that I would be immediately healed of my infirmity."

So saying, she suddenly stood on her feet completely healed - the nineteenth cure to the glory of the saint that day. Realizing what had happened, she rushed into the crowd and with tears pressed her lips to the saint's bier.

Now the procession came to the church of St. Gregory, near St. Paul's. The holy body was let down and all the people prostrated in prayer to the saint. At this point a Dane who was curious to know what was happening came on the scene. Seeing the others prostrate in prayer, he proudly remained upright, and, drawing aside the veil which covered the body, he peered inside. Suddenly he was struck with blindness. Then, realizing his sin, he confessed it, promised amendment of life and faithfulness to God and St. Edmund, and implored forgiveness. All those present joined their prayer to his, and lo! his sight was restored. Then he took off his golden armlets and offered them to the saint. Moreover, he was as good as his word and led a pious life thereafter.

For almost three years the fame of the martyr spread far and wide through the miracles of healing, both bodily and spiritual, wrought through the intercession of the saint in London.

Then St. Edmund appeared in a vision to Ethelwine and ordered him to bring his body back to Bury St. Edmunds. Immediately the monk went to Bishop Alfhun with a request to leave, explaining that he had come to London rather as a pilgrim than as a permanent resident. The bishop acceded to his request, though reluctantly. But when Ethelwine, had gone, he hastened with three clerics to the church of St. Gregory. There they tried to lift the holy body in its reliquary onto their shoulders. But to no avail: the weight was insupportable. Four more men joined them, then twelve, then twenty-four. But after much sweat and labour they had not succeeded in moving the reliquary a single inch. Then the bishop with his men felt ashamed, realizing that their devotion, though pious, was contrary to the will of God and St. Edmund. When Ethelwine came up, however, and prayed in the presence of the saint, he was able with three of his companions to life the reliquary as though it weighed nothing.

So he set out on his journey, but not unnoticed as before. For a great crowd of clergy and people followed him in great sorrow as far as the Stratford bridge, and beyond it all the villages along the route poured out to meet the saint with great joy. Bridges were repaired and roads cleared. And, as in London, many miracles took place. Near Stapleford, the lord of the village gave hospitality to the saint and was cured of a chronic illness; whereupon he donated a manor to the saint in perpetuity. Finally, the holy treasure was received by the clerics of Bury St. Edmunds and placed with all devotion in its former resting-place. There, for

centuries to come, miracles did not cease for those who sought with faith.

In 1014 the Danish King Swein came to Bury St. Edmunds, demanding tribute and threatening that if it was not paid he would burn the town with the townsfolk, destroy the church of the saint from its foundations and torture the clerics in various ways. But the townsfolk refused, trusting in the protection of St. Edmund. Nor did the tax-collectors dare to use force against them, for they had heard how the saint protected his own. So they hastened to the king and informed him of the rebellion against his authority. Meanwhile, not only the townsfolk of Bury St. Edmunds but also people from all over East Anglia hastened to the church of the saint to beseech him by prayers, fasting and almsgiving to free the land from the yoke that had been imposed upon it for ten years or more. Moreover, they asked Monk Ethelwine to make a special intercession for them at the shrine of the saint, that he would in his accustomed manner reveal a means of salvation for them through a nocturnal visitation.

That night, therefore, St. Edmund appeared to Ethelwine in his sleep, with joyful countenance and in shining white garments, and said: "Go to King Swein and tell him this from me: 'Why do you vex my little flock by imposing on them a yoke that no other king has imposed upon them? Tribute has never been demanded of, nor paid by, them at any time since my repose. Therefore correct this unjust sentence, lest, when you wish to, you will be unable to. For if you do not obey my admonition, you will soon know that you displease both God and myself; for you will discover that East Anglia has me as her protector.'"

So Ethelwine obediently sought out King Swein at Gainsborough, and humbly doing obeisance, delivered the saint's message, mixing soft words with the harsh. But the king refused to listen, ordered the monk out of his sight, and showered the saint with abuse, saying that he had no holiness. Seeing that the king had no fear of God nor reverence for the saint, Ethelwine sadly turned back. Near Lincoln he was given hospitality for the night; and as he was sleeping peacefully, St. Edmund appeared to him and said:

"Why are you fearful and sad? Have you forgotten my words and incurred the risk of falling into despair? Rise immediately and continue your journey; for before you will have reached its end, news about King Swein will delight you and all your compatriots."

Strengthened by this revelation, Ethelwine rose and set off on his way before dawn. As he was travelling he heard the sound of Danish horsemen behind him. One came up, greeted him, and said:

"By your leave, are you the priest whom I saw the day before yesterday delivering the orders of a certain king to King Swein?"

"I am."

"Alas, alas," he said, "how weighty was your threat! How true your prophecy! For the death of King Swein has left England glad and Denmark in mourning. The night after you left, the king went to bed happy and fearing nothing. The whole palace was sleeping soundly. Suddenly the king was woken up by an unknown soldier standing before him, a man of wondrous beauty and brandishing arms. Addressing the king by his own name, he said: 'Do you want tribute from St. Edmund's land, O king? Get up - here it is.' He got up but fell back on his bed, terrified at the sight of the arms, and began to cry out. Then the soldier went up to him, thrust him through with his lance and left. Hearing his cry: 'Help! Help! St. Edmund has come to kill me!', his men came rushing in and found him dead, covered in his own blood."

Marianus relates that at that moment in Essex, a pious man named Wulfmar who had been ill for three days with a disease that deprived him of the use of his tongue and of all his limbs, suddenly sat up on his bed in the presence of his parents and neighbours, and said:

"On this night and at this hour King Swein has been killed, pierced through with the lance of St. Edmund."

Saying this, he fell back on his bed and died.

When Ethelwine heard this news, he judged the time opportune to publish what he had previously covered in silence. The story then spread like wildfire throughout the province, inciting all the English to refuse to pay tribute. King Swein perished on the feast of the Meeting of the Lord, February 2, 1014, and his body was placed in salt and shipped back to Denmark.

Thus was the Scripture fulfilled: "The saints shall boast in glory, and they shall rejoice upon their beds. The high praise of God shall be in their throat, and two-edged swords shall be in their hands, to do vengeance among the heathen, punishments among the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters, and their nobles with manacles of iron, to do among them the judgement that is written. This glory shall be to all His saints." (Psalm 149.5-9)

St. Edmund is commemorated on November 20, the date of his martyrdom, and April 29, the date of his translation.

Holy Martyr-King Edmund, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Abbot Aelfric, *Passio Sancti Eadmundi; Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, E, 870, 1013; *Nova Legende Anglie*, Appendix II, pp. 596-602; Rev. J.B. Mackinlay, *Saint Edmund King and Martyr*, London, 1893; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,*

Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 120-122; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 142-148, 282)

40. SAINT EDWARD THE MARTYR, KING OF ENGLAND

In 1976, two Orthodox Christians of the Orthodox Parish of St. Michael the Archangel, Guildford, Surrey (Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia) made contact with Mr. J. Wilson-Claridge, an amateur archaeologist and the owner of the wonder-working relics of Martyr-King Edward of England, who was killed over a thousand years ago, on March 18/31, 979. Mr. Wilson-Claridge was looking for a worthy reliquary for the relics of the king-martyr, and was not satisfied by the offers to house them made by the Catholic and Anglican Churches. In response to the offer of the Orthodox Christians to give the English Orthodox king a worthy resting-place, Mr Wilson-Claridge decided to give his relics to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR); and on September 3/16, 1984, they were formally accepted on behalf of the ROCOR by Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) of Washington and Eastern America, and placed in a beautiful reliquary in the Orthodox Church of St. Edward, Brookwood, near Guildford, Surrey, England.

The holy Martyr-King Edward was the son of King Edgar the Peaceable of England and his first wife, Queen Ethelfleda, who died not long after his birth in 963 or 964. Already before St. Edward's birth, his father had had a dream. He told this to his mother, the abbess St. Elgiva, who was renowned for her gifts of prophecy and wonder-working. She interpreted the dream as follows:- "After your death the Church of God will be attacked. You will have two sons. The supporters of the second will kill the first, and while the second will rule on earth the first will rule in heaven." This interpretation proved to be correct…

Now King Edgar had been anointed *twice* on the model of King David: first in 960 or 961, when he became King of England, and again in 973, when his dominion expanded to the north and west and he became "Emperor of Britain", receiving the tribute of eight sub-kings of the Celts and Vikings. But between these two anointings he had married again and fathered a second son, Ethelred. When King Edgar died in 975 (his relics were discovered to be incorrupt in 1052), Ethelred's partisans, especially his mother, argued that Ethelred should be made king in preference to his elder half-brother Edward, on the grounds that Edgar had not been anointed when he begat Edward in 959 or 960, and that his first wife, Edward's mother, had *never* been anointed, so that the throne should pass to the younger son, Ethelred, who had been born "in the purple" when both his parents were anointed sovereigns.

The conflict was settled when the archbishop of Canterbury, St. Dunstan, seized the initiative and anointed St. Edward. However, the defeated party of Ethelred did not give up their opposition to God's chosen one…

St. Edward, according to an early source, "was a young man of great devotion and excellent conduct. He was completely Orthodox, good and of holy life.

Moreover, he loved above all things God and the Church. He was generous to the poor, a haven to the good, a champion of the Faith of Christ, a vessel full of every virtuous grace."

However, many troubles met the young king on his accession to the kingdom. A great famine was raging through the land, and, beginning in the West and spreading to the East, a violent attack was stirred up against the holy monasteries by a prominent nobleman named Elfhere. Many of the monasteries which King Edgar had established were destroyed, and the monks were forced to flee. Thus according to a contemporary monastic writer: "The whole kingdom was thrown into confusion, the bishops were agitated, the noblemen stirred up, the monks shaken with fear, the people terrified. The married clergy were glad, for their time had come. Abbots, with their monks, were expelled, and married clergy, with their wives, were introduced [in their place]."

The root of the trouble was that in the previous reign the white clergy had been expelled from the monasteries in which they had been living unlawfully, had been replaced by real monks, and were now seeking to be re-established in their former place. Also, the nobles coveted the lands which King Edgar had given to the monasteries. Already in the previous reign there had been a council to discuss this question, and when it was suggested that the white clergy be restored to their place, a voice was heard from a cross on the wall: "Far be it from you! You have done well: to change again would be wrong."

In spite of this, the pressure continued and erupted into violence at the beginning of the reign of King Edward. However, King Edward and Archbishop Dunstan stood firm in a series of stormy councils attended by all the leading men of Church and State. Thus at one council, which took place at Kirtlington, Oxfordshire, after Pascha, 977, the tension was so great that the king's tutor, a bishop, died suddenly during the proceedings. Then, at another council in Calne, Wiltshire, when the white clergy were renewing their complaints, St. Dunstan said: "Since in my old age you exert yourselves to the stirring up of old quarrels, I confess that I refuse to give in, but commit the cause of His Church to Christ the Judge." As he spoke the house was suddenly shaken; the floor of the upper room in which they were assembled collapsed, and the enemies of the Church were thrown to the ground and crushed by the falling timber. Only the beam on which the archbishop was sitting on a beam did not move.

In all this turmoil King Edward stood firm together with the archbishop in defence of the Church and the monasteries. For this reason some of the nobles decided to remove him and replace him with his weaker younger brother. They seized their opportunity on March 18, 979.

On that day the king was out hunting with dogs and horsemen near Wareham

in Dorset. Turning away from this pursuit, the king decided to visit his young brother Ethelred, who was being brought up in the house of his mother at Corfe Castle, near Wareham. He took a small retinue with him, but suddenly, as if playing a joke on him, his retinue broke up and went off in all directions, leaving him to continue on his way alone.

When Ethelred's mother, Queen Etheldritha, heard from her servants that the young king was approaching, she hid the evil design in her heart and went out to meet him in an open and friendly manner, inviting him into her house. But he declined, saying that he only wished to see his brother and talk to him. The queen then suggested that while he was waiting he should have a drink. The king accepted. At that moment one of the queen's party went up to the king and gave him a kiss like Judas. For then, just as the king was lifting the cup to his lips, the man who had kissed him leapt at him from the front and plunged a knife in his body. The king slipped from the saddle of his horse and was dragged with one foot in the stirrup until he fell lifeless into a stream at the base of the hill on which Corfe Castle stands.

The queen then ordered that the holy body be seized and hidden in a hut nearby. In obedience to her command, the servants took the body by the feet and threw it ignominiously into the hut, concealing it with some mean coverings.

Now there lived in that hut a woman blind from birth whom the queen used to support out of charity. While she spent the night there alone with the holy body, suddenly, in the middle of the night, a wonderful light appeared and filled the whole hut. Struck with awe, the poor woman cried out: "Lord, have mercy!" At this, she suddenly received her sight, which she had so long desired. And then, removing the covering, she discovered the dead body of the holy king. The present church of St. Edward at Corfe stands on the site of this miracle.

The stream into which the holy king's body first fell was found to have healing properties. Many pilgrims who washed their eyes in the water recovered or improved their sight. These include two reported cases in modern times.

At dawn the next day, when the queen learned of the miracle, she was troubled and decided to conceal the body in a different way. She ordered her servants to take it up and bury it in a marshy place. At the same time she commanded that no one should grieve over the king's death, or even speak about it. Then she retired to a manor in her possession called Bere, about ten miles from Corfe.

Meanwhile, such grief took hold of Ethelred over his brother's death that he could not stop weeping. This angered his mother, who took some candles and beat him with them viciously, hoping thereby to stem the flow of his tears. It is said that thereafter Ethelred so hated candles that he would never allow them to be lit in his

presence.

When St. Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury, heard the news he was greatly saddened by the death of his beloved spiritual son, and at the coronation of his half-brother, Ethelred, at Kingston he prophesied great sorrow for the English people in the coming reign. The prophecy was exactly fulfilled after Dunstan's death in 988, when the pagan Danes invaded England and eventually, in 1016, after over twenty years of bloody war, conquered the country.

The contemporary *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* expressed the universal horror felt by the English Orthodox people at this time: "No worse deed for the English was ever done than this, since first they came to the land of Britain. Men murdered him, but God exalted him; in life he was an earthly king, but after death he is now a heavenly saint. His earthly kinsmen would not avenge him, yet his Heavenly Father has amply avenged him. Those earthly slayers would have destroyed his memory upon earth; but the Heavenly Avenger has spread his fame abroad, in the heavens and upon the earth. Those who before would not bow in reverence to his living body, now humbly bend the knee to his dead bones. Now can we perceive that the wisdom of men, their deliberations and their plots, are as nothing against God's purpose."

Almost a year passed, and it pleased Almighty God to make known the heavenly glory of the martyr-king. A pillar of fire was seen over the place where his body was hidden, lighting up the whole area. This was seen by some devout inhabitants of Wareham, who met together and raised the body from the place where it lay. Immediately a sweet, clear spring of healing water sprang up in that place. Then, accompanied by a huge crowd of mourners, the body was taken to the church of the Most Holy Mother of God in Wareham and buried at the east end of the church. This first translation of the holy relics took place on February 13, 980.

Meanwhile, the queen's deceit and treachery were made known throughout the country, the fame of the innocent martyr-king increased, and many signs and miracles testified to his holiness. The nobleman Elfhere, deeply repenting of his destruction of monasteries and opposition to the king, decided to have the body translated to a worthier resting-place. Bishops and abbots were invited, together with Abbess Wulfrida of Wilton and the nuns of Wilton monastery, who included St. Edith, the king-martyr's half-sister. A great number of laymen and women of Dorset also converged on Wareham.

Then the holy body was disinterred in the presence of the whole people and was found to be completely incorrupt. Seeing this, St. Dunstan and the other bishops led the people in hymns of praise to God, while St. Edith ran up to her brother's body and embraced it with tears of joy and sorrow combined. Then the body was lifted onto a bier and with a great procession of clergy and laity was taken to

Shaftesbury, to the women's monastery founded in the ninth century by St. Edward's ancestor, King Alfred the Great, in honour of the Most Holy Mother of God. The procession began on February 13, 981 and arrived at Shaftesbury seven days later, on February 20. There the holy body was received with honour by the nuns and was buried with great ceremony on the north side of the altar.

On the way from Wareham to Shaftesbury, two poor men who were so bent over and paralyzed that they could hardly crawl on their hands and knees were brought close to the bier. Those carrying it then lowered the sacred body down to their level, and immediately in the sight of all they were restored to full health. A great shout rose to the heavens, and all together glorified the holy martyr.

On hearing of the miracles worked through the saint, Queen Etheldritha was overcome by remorse and decided to go to him to ask forgiveness. But as she was riding to Shaftesbury with her servants, her horse suddenly stopped and refused to go further, nor would he be moved by blows of the whip and threats. Then the queen realized that she was held back by the force of her sins. Jumping off the horse, she prepared to continue her journey on foot. But again she was hurled back and could make no progress. Later, weeping bitterly over her sins, the queen retired to a convent at Wherwell, where "for many years she clothed her pampered body in hair-cloth, sleeping at night on the ground without a pillow, and mortifying her flesh with every kind of penance".

During the twenty years after the translation of the relics to Shaftesbury, many miracles were worked through the intercession of the holy martyr-king. Thus there was a woman living in a remote part of England, who had an infirmity of her legs and daily poured forth prayers for her health. One night St. Edward appeared to her in a dream and said: "When you rise at dawn, go without delay to the place where I am buried, for there you will receive new shoes that are necessary for your infirmity." Waking early, the woman reported the dream to her neighbour; but she, disbelieving the vision, declared that it was imagination. And so the woman disobeyed the command of the saint. But he, appearing to her a second time, said: "Why do you spurn my command and so greatly neglect your health? Go then to my tomb and there you will be delivered." She recovered her strength and said: "Who are you, lord? Where shall I find your tomb?" He replied: "I am King Edward, recently killed by an unjust death and buried at Shaftesbury, in the church of Mary, the blessed Mother of God." The woman woke early, and thinking over what she had seen, took was needed for her journey and made her way to the monastery. There she prayed for some time with humble heart to God and St. Edward, and was restored to health.

Great miracles continued to be worked at the tomb of the royal martyr, and in 1001 his brother Ethelred, who had succeeded him on the throne, granted the town of Bradford-on-Avon "to Christ and His saint, my brother Edward, whom, covered

in his own blood, the Lord Himself has deigned to magnify by many signs of power."

At about the same time the tomb in which the saint lay began to rise from the ground, indicating that he wished his remains to be raised from the earth. In confirmation of this he appeared in a vision to a monk and said: "Go to the convent called by the famous name of Shaftesbury and take commands to the nun Ethelfreda who is in charge of the other servants of God there. You will say to her that I do not wish to remain any longer in the place where I now lie, and command her on my behalf to report this to my brother without delay." Rising early, and perceiving that the vision he had seen was from God, the monk quickly made his way to the abbess as he had been commanded and told her in order all that had been revealed to him. Then the abbess, giving thanks to God, immediately told the whole story to King Ethelred, at the same time making known to him the elevation of the tomb. The king was filled with joy and would have been present at the elevation if he had been able. But, being prevented by the invasions of the Danes, he sent messengers to the holy bishops Wulsin of Sherborne and Elfsin of Dorchester-on-Thames, as well as to other men of respected life, instructing them to raise his brother's tomb from the ground and replace it in a fitting place. Following the king's command, those men joyfully assembled at the monastery with a vast crowd of laymen and women. The tomb was opened with the utmost reverence, and such a wonderful fragrance issued from it that all present thought that they were standing amidst the delights of Paradise. Then the holy bishops drew near, bore away the sacred relics from the tomb, and, placing them in a casket carefully prepared for this, carried it in procession to the holy place of the Saints together with other holy relics. This elevation of the relics of St. Edward took place on June 20, 1001.

St. Edward was officially glorified by an act of the All-English Council of 1008, presided over by St. Alphege, archbishop of Canterbury (who was martyred by the Danes in 1012). King Ethelred ordered that the saint's three feastdays (March 18, February 13 and June 20) should be celebrated throughout England. The church in which St. Edward's relics rested was rededicated to the Mother of God and St. Edward, and that part of the town was renamed "Edwardstowe" in honour of the saint. The town kept this name throughout the Middle Ages: only after the Protestant Reformation was the original name of Shaftesbury restored.

Many miracles continued to be worked at the tomb of St. Edward. Thus during the reign of his nephew, King Edward the Confessor (1042-1066), a man named John living in north-west France, whose whole body had been so bent by severe pain that his heels were touching his loins and he was unable to stand upright, was told in a vision at night to go to England to the monastery at Shaftesbury, where St. Edward lay, as there he would recover hid health. He told this vision to his neighbours and relatives, and with their help and advice he crossed the English

Channel and after many detours at last reached the monastery. Having prayed there for some time to God and St. Edward he recovered his health, and remained as a servant at the monastery for the rest of his life.

Not long after, a leper came to the tomb of the saint, and after invoking God's help by prayers and vigils, he received complete cleansing from his infirmity. Another man who had been bound in heavy chains for his sins was suddenly freed from them as he was praying earnestly at the tomb. Again, Bishop Herman of Salisbury was staying at the monastery, and a poor blind man whom he supported was with him. While the bishop was delayed, the blind man decided to go and pray at the tomb, led by a boy who guided his steps. He continued praying until evening, when the wardens who were looking after the church asked him to leave. He refused, and said that he would wait on the mercy of God and St. Edward. Impressed by his faith, they let him stay, while insisting that the boy return to his lodgings. After staying at his place for some time, the blind man was overwhelmed first by extreme cold, then by extreme heat. And then he recovered his sight. The next morning, some would not believe the miracle; but when witnesses came forward who affirmed that he had been blind for a long time, praise was given to Christ Who works great wonders through His Saints.

One of the miracles associated with St. Edward was the continual quivering of his incorrupt lung. It is known that this lung still quivered in the twelfth century. However, in 1904 an eleventh-century glass vessel contained "a shrunken nut-like object" was found beneath a small marble slab in front of the High Altar. The vase may still be seen in Winchester Cathedral, but the relic, which was probably St. Edward's lung, was thrown away…

In 1931 Mr. Wilson-Claridge discovered some bones in a lead casket in the north transept of Shaftesbury Abbey. Although the archaeological evidence suggested that these were indeed the relics of the saint, he decided to seek the advice of a professional osteologist, Dr. T.E.A. Stowell. He examined the bones and in a long report published in *The Criminologist* came to the conclusion that they were the bones of a young man of about 20 (the saint was about 17 when he was martyred), that he was a Saxon and not a Celt, that certain bones were missing (we know that parts of the relics were removed to Leominster and Abingdon in 1008), and that certain bones were injured. These injuries corresponded to a person being dragged backwards over the pommel of a saddle and having his leg twisted in a stirrup.

From all this evidence Dr. Stowell concluded that these were indeed the bones of the martyred King Edward.

However, at the time when the holy relics were about to be transferred to the Russian Church Outside of Russia, opposition suddenly arose. Another (two-page) report on the relics was commissioned which challenged the findings of Dr.

Stowell, arguing that the bones were of an older man. Then the brother of Mr. Wilson-Claridge sought a high-court injunction preventing the Russian Church from receiving the relics. Even some members of the ROCOR supported the brother of Mr. Wilson-Claridge, claiming that he had a half share right in the relics. The citizens of Shaftesbury also argued that the relics should stay in Shaftesbury.

One ROCOR hierarch, Archbishop Mark of Germany, questioned whether St. Edward was a true saint because, as he claimed, the heresy of the Filioque was entrenched in England at the time. However, a Synodical decision declared in favour of St. Edward, and the doubting hierarch "agreed with the former decision after having been acquainted with the historical information compiled by His Grace, Bishop Gregory, who cited a list of names of Western saints of the same period who have long been included in our list of saints (among whom are St. Ludmilla, St. Wenceslaus of Czechia, and others)."

The present writer has argued that it is far from clear whether the Filioque was in general use in England at the time of St. Edward (late tenth century), and that in any case no less rigorous a theologian than St. Maximus the Confessor had declared, when the Roman Church first adopted the Filioque, that she did not in fact understand the teaching in a heretical sense *at that time*. Thus the possibility exists of a heresy being accepted at an early stage out of ignorance, while those who hold it remain Orthodox.

In England, meanwhile, a long legal battle began, during which the holy relics were kept in a bank vault. At one point the Attorney General decided that the relics belonged to the Queen of England. Then he changed his mind, but insisted that the relics should be kept especially secure – probably because they were the relics of a king.

Finally, on March 18/31, 1995, the principal feastday of St. Edward, the case against the ROCA was dismissed and the relics were returned to the Church.

Miracles continue to be worked through St. Edward to the present day. Thus the English Orthodox Christian "S.P." writes: "I was very happy to be pregnant again but saddened to learn that I had caught the rare disease of toxoplasmosis. The doctors advised me to abort at once: 'Come through to this room,' they said, 'and it will be over in a few minutes.' As an Orthodox Christian, I refused to have any truck with this. They promised me, a malleable (so they thought) young woman of 23, a child with no legs and no arms. I put my faith in God. Later, six months pregnant, I returned to the clinic for a scan. This time the doctors came out with a slightly more reassuring story: my child, for they could see him now, would have arms and legs, but he would be born blind.

"It was at this very time that I first came to read the little brochure, *The Recorded*

Miracles of St. Edward the Martyr. I had always been attracted by St. Edward's icon and when I read that his first miracle had been to heal a blind woman, I was overwhelmed with the thought that my son should be called Edward. We decided to baptise him so, despite our Archbishop who refused to recognise the Saint and tried to force my husband into changing the name. And when Edward was born, he was not blind, but a good, happy baby, perfectly normal and so strong and healthy! Imagine our joy! The doctors were very surprised, and perhaps a little ashamed of themselves, but they did show me and my husband the umbilical cord and placenta. It was astonishing, for we could clearly see how the top half of the cord had been discoloured an ugly black by an infection. The discoloration had stopped exactly half-way down the cord. I am so thankful to God and St. Edward. The Lord is truly wonderful in His Saints."

S. McDonnell, an Orthodox Christian from Australia, writes: "On Great Friday this year I met up with Edward, a Bulgarian friend, in Jerusalem. He related the following to me while we were at the Holy Sepulchre.

"As a child, he had not been baptised. Recently he had asked to receive the sacrament of holy baptism in Jerusalem. The priest, Fr. Iakovos, agreed but informed Edward that he would have to change his name because it 'was not Orthodox'. Much saddened, Edward agreed, but went home with a grief-stricken heart because he was fond of his name. That night while he slept, a young man wearing a cloak of purple and a square shaped crown of gold appeared and said: 'I am Edward, King of the English. You bear my name. Be baptised.' That was all. (I later found out from Fr. Niphon of St. Edward's Brotherhood that the Saxon crown was a square one.)

"I was surprised and showed my friend Edward a paper icon of St. Edward that I carry with me. I asked if this was the one. Shocked, he stammered out yes, noticing particularly that St. Edward's crown was square and his cloak purple for a King. You can imagine how shaken I was by this, my mouth was open, I just couldn't believe it."

L.J. writes: "I was suffering from terrible pains in my left eye. Nothing helped me, and all the specialists agreed that surgery is going to do more damage than help. One night, when I woke up from intense pains in my left eye, I, without thinking what and why I am doing, started to reach for a tiny piece of cotton, which was given me at St. Edward's Brotherhood. I found it and put it on my left eye." She explains how she called upon St. Edward in a short prayer, and continues: "And immediately went to sleep. In the morning I thought 'what a strange thing I have done in the night'. I looked in St. Herman Calendar and realised that it was exactly St. Edward's feast day – March 31! I thought, 'If only I would have asked them to remember me in a molieben, my eye would have healed completely.' Since March 31, or, more precisely, April 1, I have never again suffered from the pains in

my eye, although it has not healed completely."

St. Edward the Martyr is commemorated on March 31, February 13 and June 20. The translation of his relics in 1984 is commemorated on September 3.

Holy Martyr-King Edward, pray to God for us!

(Sources: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*; Anonymous, "Vita Oswaldi", in J. Raine, *Historians of the Church of York*, Rolls Series, 1874, vol. I; "Passio et Miracula Sancti Edwardis Regis et Martyris" (11th century), in Christine Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, University of Leeds, 1971; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*; J.M. Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxoni*, 1845-8, no. 706; D.J.V. Fisher, "The Anti-Monastic Reaction in the Reign of Edward the Martyr", *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 1952, X, pp. 254-270; Theodoric Paulus, quoted in *Orthodoxy America*, May-June, 1981; *Living Orthodoxy*, volume IV, no. 4, July-August, 1982, p. 16; V. Moss, "Western Saints and the Filioque", *Living Orthodoxy*, volume IV, no. 1, January-February, 1982, p. 29; J. Wilson-Claridge, *The Recorded Miracles of St. Edward the Martyr,* Brookwood: King Edward Orthodox Trust, 1984; V. Moss, *The Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*, Seattle: St. Nectarios Press, volume 2, 1993; Archimandrite Alexis (Pobjoy), "The St. Edward Brotherhood", *Necropolis News*, Brookwood, Surrey, vol. 2, no. 1, April, 1996; "S.P.", "A Miracle of St. Edward the Martyr", *Orthodox England*, vol. 1, no. 4, June, 1998, p. 14; "A Holy Name: A Miracle of St. Edward", *Orthodox England*, vol. 2, no. 3, March, 1999, p. 11; "Miracle of Saint Edward", *The Shepherd*, vol. XXVI, no. 2, October, 2005, p. 23; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 81, 216-219)

41. SAINT EDWARD THE CONFESSOR, KING OF ENGLAND

The holy King Edward was born in about 1003. His father was the English King Aethelred, and his mother – the Danish princess Emma, daughter of Duke Richard of Normandy. When Queen Emma was pregnant with him, "all of the men of the country," as his earliest, anonymous biographer records, "took an oath that if a man child should come forth as the fruit of her labours, they would await in him their lord and king who would rule over the whole race of the English."

In spite of this promise, if it is genuine, Edward's claim to the throne was laid aside in favour of those of Aethelred's six sons by an earlier marriage – in particular, Edmund Ironside, who became king in 1015 and was killed in the same year, and the Danish King Canute's sons by Aelgifu of Northampton (Harold I) and Queen Emma (Hardacanute). It must therefore have seemed a great miracle to his contemporaries that Edward should finally, when already in middle age, have succeeded to the throne of his fathers, reigning in peace for another twenty-four years. It must have seemed, moreover, that God was taking pity on His people again after the heavy chastisement of the Danish yoke (1016-1042); for, as the anonymous biographer writes, "just as a father, after chastising his children, is a peace with them again, shows himself a soothing comforter, so God's loving kindness, sparing the English after the heavy weight of his rebuke, showed them a flower preserved from the root of their ancient kings, and both gave them the strength and fired their minds to seek this flower for the kingdom as well as for their salvation."

When Edward was still in his cradle, he was brought to the monastery of Ely by his parents, "and was offered," according to the monastery's chronicler, "above the holy altar… Moreover, as the elders of the church who were present and saw it used to tell, he was brought up there in the monastery with the boys for a long time, learning the psalms and hymns of the Lord with them."

Some have doubted whether an English king could have been dedicated his son to a life of monastic chastity in this way. But he was not regarded as the immediate heir: in the charters of the latter period of Aethelred's reign, his name is added at the bottom of the list of princes. Moreover, so close were the links between the English royal family and the monasteries that both Kings Edgar and Edward the Martyr were brought up by monks, while the daughters of Kings Alfred and Edward the Elder, and the sister of Edward the Martyr, were dedicated as nuns. It is therefore not impossible that the future King Edward was brought up by monks, at least until the royal family was forced to flee to Normandy in 1013. And his later virginal life, even in marriage, is certainly not inconsistent with a vow made by his parents when he was only a child.

The fruits of the boy's pious upbringing were soon evident. On February 2, 1014, King Swein of Denmark was miraculously killed by St. Edmund while he was ravaging East Anglia. This event was made known by revelation to Prince Edward, although he

was only a boy of twelve at the time.

But when Edward had this revelation, his father King Aethelred and the whole of the royal family were in exile in Normandy, expelled by their subjects, who had been exasperated by his failed policies against the Danes, and especially by the fruitless payment of ever larger amounts of tax, the Danegeld. Archbishop Wulfstan of York saw in this and other betrayals the root cause of the people's failure to repel the pagan Danes: "For there are here in the land great disloyalties towards God and towards the state, and there are also many here in the country who are betrayers of their lords in various ways. And the greatest betrayal in the world of one's lord is that a man betray his lord's soul; and it is also a very great betrayal of one's lord in the world, that a man should plot against his lord's life or, living, drive him from the land; and both have happened in this country. They plotted against Edward [the Martyr] and then killed him… Many are forsworn and greatly perjured, and pledges are broken over and again; and it is evident in this nation that the wrath of God violently oppresses us…"

The English repented and recalled their king from exile. However, on April 23, 1016, he died "after a life of much hardship and many difficulties. Then, after his death, all the councillors of England chose Edmund [Ironside, his eldest son by his first wife] as king, and he defended his kingdom valiantly during his lifetime."

The seven short months of Edmund's reign are among the most dramatic in English history, matched only by the nine months of Harold Godwinson's in 1066. The pattern of events, moreover, was very similar to that later drama: great extremes of heroism and treachery, culminating in the crucifixion of a conquered country. Thus immediately after the witan proclaimed Edmund king in London, the bishops and chief men of Wessex assembled and unanimously elected Canute, the son of King Swein, as king. Meeting him at Southampton, writes Florence of Worcester, "they repudiated and renounced in his presence all the race of Aethelred, and concluded peace with him, swearing loyalty to him, and he also swore to them that he would be a loyal lord to them in affairs of Church and state."

Undeterred by this treachery to the ancient royal dynasty that had served England so well, King Edmund raised no less than five armies against the Danes, and was finally killed, on November 30, not by a Dane, but by the ubiquitous traitor of his father's reign. He was buried beside his grandfather, King Edgar the Peaceable, at Glastonbury. And so the whole of England passed into the hands of Canute the Dane…

The young Prince Edward, lover of monasticism though he was, had shown great valour as a warrior in this period. Thus we read in a Scandinavian source that, during the battle of London Bridge between the English and the Danes under Canute, at which Edward fought alongside his half-brother, King Edmund Ironside, "Thorkel the Tall had taken the one part of the town; many of his host had fallen there. Then Earl Thorkel the Tall went to King Canute to win the other part of the town, and as luck would have

it, just saved his life, for Edward, King Aethelred's son, struck at that time a blow which men have held in memory in after days. Thorkel thrust Canute off his horse, but Edward smote asunder the saddle and the horse's back. After that, however, the brothers had to take to flight, and Canute exulted in his victory, and thanked King Olaf for his help."

Canute was to become an exemplary defender of the Church; but at the beginning of his reign he acted like the inveterate pagan that he still was, inflicting the last and largest ever Danegeld tax on the nation, while disposing of all his possible political opponents. Thus Prince Edwy, on of King Edmund, was killed, while his other sons Edward and Edmund were sent "to the king of the Swedes to be killed." The Swedish king, however, was a Christian, baptized by the English missionary bishop St. Sigfrid. So he would not acquiesce in Canute's demand, in spite of the treaty he had with him. Instead, "he sent them to the king of the Hungarians, Solomon by name, to be preserved and brought up there…"

To avoid the same fate, St. Edward and his brother Alfred were forced to return to Normandy.

Soon the princes had another shock. In July, 1017 King Canute married Emma, King Aethelred's widow. To her sons in exile in Normandy it must have come as a shock that their mother should marry the conqueror of their country and the murderer of their brothers, while letting them languish alone in exile. This may explain, at least in part, the difficult relations King Edward had with his mother at the beginning of his reign.

Now on the death of King Canute, the throne of England passed to his son by Aelgifu of Northampton, Harold, while Denmark was ruled by his son by Queen Emma, Hardacanute. Initially, Emma hoped that her son Hardacanute would become king of England, too; and, supported by the powerful Earl Godwin of Wessex, she even had coins struck in Hardacanute's name at her base in Winchester, while the coins in currency north of the Thames bore Harold's name. However, when it became clear that he was not going to come to England from Denmark, she turned to her sons in Normandy. She wrote to them to leave Normandy and join her at Winchester. Edward came first, but was forced to return after a battle in the Southampton area. Then came his brother Alfred.

The murder of Prince Alfred – probably by Earl Godwin – was one of the excuses William of Normandy used for the invasion of 1066. The years which followed the murder, until Alfred's brother Edward ascended the throne, were among the most wretched in English Orthodox history. The Danish rule, which had been tolerable under Canute, now became an oppressive yoke. In 1038 Archbishop Athelnoth "the Good" died, followed, seven days later, by Bishop Athelric of Selsey: "for he had besought God that he should not live long in this world after the death of his most

beloved father, Athelnoth." In the next two years these losses were compounded by the deaths of Bishops Alfric of Elmham, Beorhtheah of Worcester, Beorhtmaer of Lichfield and Edmund of Durham, who were succeeded by men of much lower spiritual stature. Thus to York came Alfric Puttoc, or the Hawk, who was angry when, in 1038, the vacant see of Worcester was not also given to him, as it had been, by an exceptional measure, to two of his predecessors. Instead the king gave it to a favourite of Godwin's, Lifing of Crediton, who now held three sees simultaneously. Nor was this the only case of sees held in plurality or through simony. Elmham was given to a king's chaplain, Stigand (later archbishop of Canterbury). "But he was afterwards ejected, and Grimcetel was elected for gold, and held then two dioceses."

However, as the spiritual atmosphere darkened, a revelation was given to one of the last of the holy bishops – Brihtwald of Ramsbury. He was once weeping over the plight of the people, "and asked," records King Edward's anonymous biographer, "that God's mercy should look favourably upon them. At that time he passed the watches of his weeping in the monastery of Glastonbury, and weary after so many tears the man of God fell asleep. When lo! In the Holy of Holies he saw the blessed Peter, the first of the Apostles, consecrate the image of a seemly man as king, mark out for him a life of chastity, and set the years of his reign by a fixed reckoning of his life. And when the king even at this juncture asked him of the generations to come who would reign in the kingdom, Peter answered, 'The kingdom of the English is of God; and after you he has already provided a king according to His will.'"

The "seemly man" marked out for a life of chastity was King Edward. And the prophecy began to be fulfilled when King Harold's successor Hardacanute died suddenly while drinking at a marriage feast in 1042. Supported by the most powerful man in the realm, Earl Godwin, Prince Edward was recalled from exile. And so Edward was consecrated king of England in London at Pascha, 1043. "Great was the joy that the English had," writes an early French chronicler. "For the Danes had held them cheap, and often humiliated them. If a hundred of them met a single Dane, it would go badly for them if they did not bow to him. And if they met upon a bridge, they waited; it went badly for them if they moved before the Dane had passed. As they passed, they made obeisance, and whoever failed to do this was shamefully beaten if caught. So cheap were the English held. So much did the Danes insult them."

The long years of exile in Normandy seem to have wrought a profound change in the former fiery warrior of London Bridge. He was a man, writes William of Malmesbury, "from the simplicity of his manners, little calculated to govern, but devoted to God, and in consequence directed by Him; for while he continued to reign, there arose no popular commotions which were not immediately quelled. There was no foreign war; all was calm and peaceable, both at home and abroad, which is the more an object of wonder, because he conducted himself so mildly that he would not even utter a word of reproach to the meannest person…. In the meantime, the regard which his subjects entertained for him was extreme, as was also the fear of foreigners;

for God assisted his simplicity, that he might be feared who knew not how to be angry."

And yet the inner fire was still there, though well controlled. "If some cause aroused his temper," writes William of Malmesbury, "he seemed terrible as a lion, but he never revealed his anger by railing. To all petitioners he would either grant graciously or graciously deny, so that his gracious denial seemed the highest generosity. In public he carried himself as a true king and lord; in private with his courtiers as one of them, but with royal dignity unimpaired. He entrusted the cause of God to his bishops and to men skilled in canon law, warning them to act according to the case, and he ordered his secular judges, princes and palace lawyers to distinguish equitably, so that, on the one hand, righteousness might have royal support, and, on the other, evil, when it appeared, its just condemnation. This good king abrogated bad laws, with his witan established good ones, and filled with joy all that Britain over which by the grace of God and hereditary right he ruled."

Indeed, in later centuries, when the English groaned under the exactions of their Norman kings, they appealed for a return to the just laws of the good King Edward.

"In the exaction of taxes he was sparing, as he abominated the insolence of collectors: in eating and drinking he was devoid of the addiction to pleasure which his state allowed: on the more solemn festivals, though dressed in robes interwoven with gold, which the queen had most splendidly embroidered, yet still he had such forbearance as to be sufficiently majestic, without being haughty; considering in such matters rather the bounty of God than the pomp of the world. There was one secular enjoyment in which he chiefly delighted; which was hunting with fleet hounds, whose baying the woods he used with pleasure to encourage: and again, the flying those birds, whose nature it is to prey on their kindred species. In these exercises, after hearing Divine service in the morning, he employed himself whole days. In other respects he was a man by choice devoted to God, and lived the life of an angel in the administration of his kingdom: to the poor and to the stranger, more especially foreigners, and men of religious order, he was kind in invitation, munificent in his presents, and constantly exciting the monks of his own country to imitate their holiness. He was of middle height; his beard and hair swan-white; his countenance florid; fair throughout his whole person; and his form of admirable proportion."

Moreover, according to the anonymous biographer, who learned it "from the joint testimony of good and fitting men", God glorified King Edward with the gift of miracles.

"A certain young woman, already provided with a husband, but gladdened with no fruits of the marriage, had an infection of the throat and of those parts under the jaw which.. are called glands. These had so disfigured her face with an evil smelling disease that she could scarcely speak to anyone without great embarrassment. She was

informed in a dream that if she were washed in water by King Edward she would be cured of this most troublesome pox. She then, with the certainty of faith, revealed the dream's instructions. And when the king heard of it, he did not disdain to help the weaker sex, for he had the sweetest nature, and was always charming to all suitors. A dish of water was brought; the king dipped in his hand; and with the tips of his fingers he anointed the face of the young woman and the places infected with the disease. He repeated this action several times, now and then making the sign of the Cross. And believe in wonder one about to relate wonders! The diseased parts that had been treated by the smearing of the king softened and separated from the skin; and, with the pressure of the hand, worms together with pus and blood came out of various holes. Again the king kneaded with his holy hand and drew out the pus. Nor did he shrink from the stench of the sick woman until with his healing hand he had brought out all that noxious disease. Then he ordered her to be fed daily at the royal expense until she could be fully restored to health. And hardly had she been at court a week, when, all foulness washed away, the grace of God moulded her with beauty. And she, who formerly through this or some other sickness had been barren, in that year became pregnant by the same husband, and lived henceforth happily enough with all around her. Although this seems new and strange to us, the Franks aver that Edward had done this often as a youth when he was in Neustria, now known as Normandy.

"Likewise a certain blind man was going about claiming that he had been advised in sleep, that if his blind face were washed in the water with which the king rinsed his hands, he would both overcome the blindness and restore his lost sight. When Edward heard of this from his privy councillors, at first he contradicted and blamed them for believing it to be true. But when they demanded urgently that he should not resist God's will, at length he courteously agreed. It was then, as they say for certain, the day of the vigil of the festival of All Saints, when the king, having made his morning ablutions, entered the chapel. Meanwhile his servants washed the blind man with the same water, and conducted him after the king into the house of prayer. When the king left after the canonical hours had been solemnly sung in honour of all the saints, word was brought to him by his courtiers that he who was blind now saw. The king, therefore, with pious curiosity, came unto him in the chapel, and, calling him to him, inquired whether he could indeed see. This the man began to affirm and gave thanks to God. To test the truth of his words, however, the king, as pure as a dove, stretched forth the palm of his hand, and asked for an account of his action. 'You stretch out your hand, oh my lord king,' the man replied. Once more the king, grasping his forefinger and middle finger like a pair of horns before the man's eyes, asked what he did. And the man answered what he saw. Also, a third time, the king, grasped his beard in his hand, again asked him what he did. And the man furnished correctly the information that he sought. Then the king considered that he had been sufficiently examined, and went forward for a little to pray; and, having thrice bowed his knee before the altar, he gave thanks to God and entrusted the man to his servants to be maintained as long as he lived at the royal charge. The man lived for a long time at court, a witness to the virtue he had received by the glory of God."

"Again," writes Osbert of Clare, "it was revealed by a sure vision to a man who had been completely blind for three years, and who sprang from the citizens of Lincoln town, that he would recover the sight of both eyes from… Edward. For he was ordered to be washed in the water poured on the king's hands, and so be freed at length from the darkness of his former blindness. The blind man hastened quickly to court, and asked the king' servants to grant him that which he had not had for a long time. And so, when his face had been washed in the same way as the previous blind man, he was restored to health, and the renewed glory of his former condition was given back to him. There still survives to this day a witness who saw him long ago as a blind man and afterwards knew him clear-sighted, with the darkness dispelled.

"The glorious king ordered a royal palace to be built at Brill, whereupon a great crowd of rustics poured into the wood with axes. It was summer time, when men, after they have filled their bellies, are quick to rest, and then, in the afternoon, hasten back more eagerly to work. Among the other labourers on the royal building was a young man named Wulfwi, who, from his greediness for wheat, was surnamed 'Spillecorn'. He rose from sleep having lost his sight, and remained blind for nineteen years. At length God's mercy looked upon him, and he who had lacked sight for so long a time regained it through a heavenly visitation. A citizen's wife approached this man who laboured under so wondrous a disability, and told him in clear words what she had learned about him in a vision. 'Dear man,' she said, 'visit eighty churches, bare-footed and wearing only woollen clothes; and thus you will experience the merit of the saints, whose patronage you seek with faith, in the purging of your blindness; but the privilege is reserved especially to St. Edward the king that the water in which he washes his hands should restore to you the light of your eyes.' No sluggard after hearing this, the visited that number of churches, and finally he put his case to the king's chamberlains. These made no haste to seek out the king and acquaint him with the poor man's requirements. 'For the poor man is always despised'; and when money runs out the name and fruits of friendship are wont to perish. The mendicant, however, battered diligently at the door of God's mercy, in order to recover the sight of his eyes through… Edward the king. At length, worn out by the insistence of the blind man, a chamberlain went straight to the prince and related from beginning to end the vision which had been told the poor man. 'Mother of God,' said the king, 'my Lady and ever virgin Mary, stand witness that I shall be exalted beyond measure ['I shall be very grateful', according to another version] if God should work through me that of which the vision told.' Then the king dipped his fingers in the liquid element and mercifully touched the sightless eyes. And lo! Blood poured copiously through the hands of the prince. The man, cured of his blindness, cried out, and, filled with a great joy, exclaimed, 'I see, O king, your bright countenance. I see the gracious face of life. God has given me light, and Edward the anointed.' The man of God, contemplating this deed, gave thanks to Almighty God, by Whose mercy a day of brightness had dawned for the blind man. This miracle was performed by the dispensation of the Lord, just as it had once been revealed to him by the woman's vision, at the royal house called

Windsor… To the blind man miraculously made to see, he entrusted the custody of his chief palace for the term of his whole life.

"… When one of the courtiers had witnessed this great miracle, in which a blind man was freed from darkness by the king, he endeavoured reverently to steal what remained of the king's washing water. Having carried the water out of doors, he came upon four beggars, of whom three were burdened with the loss of their eyes, and on the fourth only one eye was bright. But the courtier, a man of faith, washed their blindness, and the power of God restored to them, in the court of the great king, the seven lost eyes."

The only serious blot on the life of King Edward, according to his biographers, was his relationship with his mother, Queen Emma – although, as we shall see, he repented of his harshness towards her. In 1043, the king, with Earls Godwin, Leofric and Siward, came to Winchester and imprisoned her. Then, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, they "deprived her of all her innumerable treasures, because she had been too strict with the king, her son, in that she had done less for him than he wished, both before his accession and afterwards…" It seems that she was also accused of plotting with King Magnus of Norway.

However, as Frank Barlow writes, "Emma, when reduced to poverty and despair, had a dream in which [St. Mildred] promised to help her because she, with Cnut, had patronized the translation of St. Mildred from Thanet to St. Augustine's, Canterbury. Whereupon Emma borrowed 20s., sent it by means of her thegn, Aethelweard Speaka, to Abbot AAelfstan of St. Augustine's, and, miraculously, the king's heart was changed. Edward 'felt shame for the injury he had done her, the son acknowledged the mother, he restored her to her former dignity and he who had proclaimed her guilty begged her pardon.' Everything she had possessed was restored to her; her accusers and despoilers were confounded."

Edward's suspicions of his mother may have been the result of her close links with Earl Godwin of Wessex, the murderer of his brother Prince Alfred. The king, as we have seen, owed the smoothness of his accession to the throne in large part to the support of Godwin, and it was probably in gratitude for this support that he had agreed to marry his daughter Edith. However, he had never really lost his distrust for the powerful earl, and in 1051 the latent tensions between the two men flared into open conflict.

The king had promoted to the see of Canterbury a Norman, Bishop Robert of London, in preference to Godwin's candidate (and relative), the Canterbury monk Alfric. The new archbishop quarrelled with Godwin, accusing him of encroaching on church lands in the Canterbury diocese. Then, in September, Count Eustace of Boulogne, the king's brother-in-law, came to Dover with a small detachment of men. A riot between the Frenchmen and Count Eustace's men ensued, in which several

people were killed. Godwin took the side of the men of Dover, which was in his earldom, and, having with his sons assembled a large military force, demanded of the king that he give up Count Eustace and his companions. However, the king, supported by the forces of Earls Siward, Leofric and Ralph, refused. Through the mediation of Earl Leofric, a military confrontation was avoided, and it was agreed that the king and Godwin should meet in London. But before they could meet, Godwin, seeing that his support was waning, fled. Then the king and the witan ordered the banishment of him and his five sons. Moreover, the king renounced his queen, Godwin's daughter, and she retired to the convent of Wherwell.

After Godwin's expulsion, the earldom of his eldest son Swein was given to Earl Odda, and it looked for a time as if King Edward would really be able to rule his kingdom through subordinates whom he trusted. But, even in exile, Godwin's power was still great. "If any Englishman had been told that events would take this turn," wrote the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, he would have been very surprised, for Godwin had risen to such great eminence as if he ruled the king and all England."

So the next year Godwin attempted to win back his former position by force. Helped by his sons Harold and Leofwine, who had levied troops in Ireland and landed in the West Country, he marched on London. Once again, a military confrontation was avoided, and both sides disbanded their troops. But this time the advantage was with Godwin, and the king fully restored to him and his sons, except Swein, all the honours they had forfeited. The king took back his queen, while Archbishop Robert, mounting a horse and dropping his pallium in the process, fled to the continent. Peace was restored, but in circumstances so detrimental to the king's authority, and accompanied by the fickleness of such a large part of the people, that the omens for the future looked grim.

In the very year of Godwin's rebellion, 1052, a sign was manifested which, to those with eyes to see, signified the holiness of the royal line of Wessex of which King Edward was the heir, and the evil of those who would attempt to contest its authority. For the body of Edward's grandfather, King Edgar the Peaceable, was found to be incorrupt by Abbot Ailward of Glastonbury. Moreover, the irreverence with which the holy body was handled indicated how irreverently the royal authority of St. Edward was soon to be treated.

"For when," writes William of Malmesbury, "the receptacle which he had prepared seemed too small to admit the body, he profaned the royal corpse by cutting it. When the blood immediately gushed out in torrents, shaking the hearts of the bystanders with horror. In consequence his royal remains were placed upon the altar in a shrine, which he had himself given to this church, with the head of St. Apollinaris and the relics of the Martyr Vincent; which, having purchased at great price, he had added to the beauty of the house of God. The violator of the sacred body presently became distracted; and, not long after, as he was going out of the church, he met his death by

a broken neck. But the display of royal authority did not cease with that: it proceeded further, a blind lunatic being cured there…"

At about the same time the relics of the Martyr-King Edmund of East Anglia were uncovered and found to be incorrupt by Abbot Leoftsan of Bury St. Edmund's, which further helped to demonstrate the holiness of the royal rank that Godwin had so dishonoured by his actions.

In 1053, however, when he was at the height of his power, Godwin himself died in dramatic circumstances that suggested Divine retribution. He choked on a piece of bread after swearing to the king: "Let God Who knows all things be my judge! May this crust of bread which I hold in my hand pass through my throat and leave me unharmed to show that I was innocent of your brother's death!" "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord!"

We now come to the affair of Archbishop Stigand, which was to have such fatal consequences for England. As we have seen, in 1052 Archbishop Robert fled to the continent, leaving his pallium behind. With the acquiescence of the king, but in face of the furious opposition of successive popes, Bishop Stigand of Winchester was allowed to take up the pallium and serve as archbishop in Robert's place. The question is: was he a true archbishop? And: if so, could the English Church be said to have been under the pope's jurisdiction during his archbishopric, that is, from 1052?

The fact that Stigand had not received his pallium from the pope may not have seemed important; for a generation before both Archbishop Wulfstan of York and King Canute had protested against the supposed necessity of English bishops' travelling the long and difficult journey to Rome for the pallium. Moreover, it was an historical fact that before 735 no English archbishop had done this. But Archbishop Robert was still alive and had not been formally deposed – and the pope upheld his claims.

Frank Barlow has shed some light on this problem. "Three aspects of the story need investigation," he writes. "Was England aware of Stigand's incapacity as archbishop, of his suspension from his episcopal office, and of his excommunication?

"There is no doubt that during Edward's reign Stigand was not recognised as an archbishop except in 1058 after the receipt of his pallium [which, however, he received from an "anti-pope", Benedict X, thus forming the basis for another of the charges that the papal legates levelled against him in the council of 1070]. Until that year he consecrated no bishop. By 1061, when two bishops went to Rome for consecration, his incapacity was again notorious. The Normans, too, were either aware of the position or learned it in England. William, who needed traditional and legitimate coronation, must have disregarded Stigand with the greatest reluctance. But from 1067 to 1070 seems to have been accorded full metropolitan respect by the Normans. Expediency or William's arbitrariness may have been the cause.

"On the other hand, there is no evidence that anyone regarded Stigand as suspended from his episcopal office. He appears in all the witness-lists to 'royal' diplomas. He is known to have blessed abbots in 1061, 1065, and 1066… There is no strictly contemporary evidence that he was at any time shunned by the English kings, prelates, or laity…"

The whole matter is greatly complicated, as we have seen, by the fact that the Roman papacy was anathematized by the Orthodox Church of the East in 1054, which meant that the anathemas that the Popes launched against Stigand from that time were null and void. Thus even if we agree that Stigand's position was strictly uncanonical, it must also be admitted that it was providential, in that it meant a loosening of the ties between England and Rome at precisely the moment when the latter was falling into heresy and schism. Stigand had the other, not inconsiderable advantage that he was accepted by both sides in the near-civil war that had only just come to an end; so he could serve as a peacemaker between the king and Godwin's faction.

King Edward's decision to support Stigand as against his friend Archbishop Robert and the pope himself may seem surprising in view of his close cooperation with Pope Leo in his reforming councils since 1049. Perhaps he thought that the unity of the English Church and nation at this critical hour was the overriding priority – and if, so then in view of what happened after his death, we must believe that he was right. It was at this point that the king's reputation for holiness may have played a critical part in saving his nation; for however much the popes fulminated against the "schismatic" Stigand, they never said a word against King Edward, and were forced to wait until after his death before launching an anti-English crusade…

The traditionally turbulent Anglo-Danish North had been remarkably quiet during Godwin's rebellion. This had much to do, no doubt, with the firm hand of Earl Siward of Northumbria. However, in 1053 Earl Siward died and was buried in the church which he had dedicated to St. Olaf outside York. Since his son had been killed in a battle against King Macbeth of Scotland, he was succeeded by one of Godwin's sons, Tostig.

Then, in 1057, the good Earls Leofric and Odda, who had been the foremost defenders of the Church in the Midlands, also died.

England's spiritual heart was beating more faintly now; and from now on pressure on the sickly organism from without – specifically, from Rome – began to increase. Thus it was at about this time that one of the bishops-elect, Walter of Hereford, decided to go to Rome to be consecrated. If, as seems likely, he was trying to avoid the "schismatic" Archbishop Stigand, then he avoided Stigand only to fall into the hands of the much more surely schismatic Pope Nicholas!

In 1061 this visit was followed by that of the archbishop-elect of York, Aldred, who went to Rome for his pallium in the company of Earl Tostig of Northumbria and several other English nobles. But "he found Pope Nicholas at first no friend to his desires," writes William of Malmesbury, "for Aldred was not minded to give up [the diocese of] Worcester. Aldred was so bound by ties of love to Worcester that it was dearer to him than the dignity of the archbishopric. So, after long disputation, Aldred returned homeward and came to Sutri. Earl Tostig who was with him was threatening that for this [refusal by the pope] there would be no more paying of Peter's Pence from England." However, in the course of their journey home, Aldred and Tostig "were attacked by robbers and stripped, to the great horror of beholders, and made their way back to Rome. Their sufferings so far melted the rigour of the apostolic see, that Aldred received the pallium of York, having pledged himself to resign Worcester provided that he could find a better priest in the diocese to put in his place."

It is interesting to speculate what would have happened if Aldred had returned to England without the pallium. It is quite possible that, following the example of Stigand, and with King Edward's support, he would have assumed the archbishopric anyway, thus placing both of England's metropolitan sees in schism from Rome. But the robbers – and Pope Nicholas' sense of realpolitik – saved the day for Rome.

And to reinforce his authority in England, the pope now sent two cardinals with Aldred on his journey home – this was the first papal legation to England since the council of Chelsea in 787. They stayed with Prior Wulfstan at Worcester, and, impressed by his piety, suggested him for the bishopric of Worcester. "By these praises," we read in Wulfstan's *life* by William of Malmesbury, "they aroused the goodwill of King Edward in whom the trafficker in benefices and the covetous man never found anything to forward their designs. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York gave their support to the Cardinals, the one of kindness, the other of knowledge; both by their sentence. With them in praising Wulfstan were the Earls Harold and Elfgar, men more famed for warlike courage than for religion. They bestirred themselves vigorously in his cause, sending mounted messengers on Wulfstan's behalf, who rode many miles in little time to hasten on the matter. So [Wulfstan] was presented to the Court, and bidden to take upon him the office of Bishop. He earnestly withstood them, crying out that he was unequal to so great a charge, while all men cried that he was equal to it. So entirely was the whole people agreed, that it were not wrong to say that in all those bodies there was, concerning this matter, but one mind. But, to be brief, the cardinals and archbishops would have lost their labour, had they not pleaded against his unwillingness the duty of obeying the Pope. To that plea he must needs yield… So King Edward well and truly invested Wulfstan with the Bishopric of Worcester… Not long after he was consecrated at York by [Archbishop Aldred]: because Stigand of Canterbury was under the Pope's interdict."

The new Bishop Wulfstan was the one Englishman, besides the king himself, who, by the reputation of his asceticism and miracle-working, and the power of his

preaching, could have inspired his countrymen to rebel against the now schismatical papacy if he had chosen to do so. But it may be wondered whether the legates' choice of Wulfstan for the bishopric (although they did not consecrate him) made him, so to speak, "the pope's man" at this time. As we shall see later, he served his country well in 1066 when he galvanized support in the North for the new King Harold; but after 1066 he sadly succumbed to the new Norman-papist regime.

Much depended now on the character of Wulfstan's close friend, Earl Harold, the new head of the Godwin clan and the most powerful man in England after the king. We have seen him supporting his father in rebellion against the king in 1051; but this may have been the result of family pressure rather than proof of a rebellious disposition. From 1052 he appears as completely loyal to the king, even as against the interests of his brothers; and the king appears to have trusted him in a way he never trusted his father. Unlike his father, he gave generously to the Church. And his religious feelings, already in evidence through his love for Bishop Wulfstan, were further stimulated by his healing through a holy relic which had been revealed some years earlier and had passed into the possession of his earldom.

King Edward was childless; so the question of who should succeed him became more pressing as he grew older. The king and his witan thought of Prince Edward, the son of King Edmund Ironside and the king's own nephew. After the Danish conquest of England in 1016, Edward and his family had gone into exile, first in Ladoga and Kiev in Russia, and then in Hungary. When they heard that he was alive, the English immediately sent an embassy headed by Bishop Aldred to the German Emperor Henry III in order to secure the prince's return from Hungary. Aldred failed because of Henry's conflict with Hungary; but on the death of the emperor in 1056, the king tried again, sending, probably, Earl Harold, to perform this difficult and important task.

This time the mission was successful; but shortly after his arrival in England on August 31, 1057, Prince Edward died. Great was the sorrow of the English people, who suspected foul play: "We do not know for what reason it was so arranged that he could not see his kinsman, King Edward", said the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* pointedly.

Many in the Norman faction suspected the Godwin family of removing another strong claimant to the throne. But since, as Walker argues, it was Harold Godwinson who carried out the difficult task of getting Edward from Hungary to England, it is very unlikely that he would have had any hand in an assassination attempt. Moreover, Edward's son Edgar was always treated with honour by Harold.

In 1063 Earls Harold and Tostig conducted a highly successful campaign by land and sea to subdue Prince Gruffydd of North Wales, who had been encroaching on English territory. The subjection of the Welsh further enhanced the prestige of Earl Harold, who, as well as being the biggest landowner in the country and the king's brother-in-law, was now the king's most trusted and efficient servant. There must have

been many at this time who thought that he, rather than the young and inexperienced Prince Edgar, should succeed the old King Edward.

But in 1064 Earl Harold made a great blunder. The story is related with variants and inconsistencies in the Norman sources and on the Bayeux tapestry, but is not related at all in the pre-Conquest English sources. Nevertheless, this much is clear: that Harold sailed from Bosham in Sussex on a mission to the continent, that he was storm-driven onto the coast of Ponthieu, where he was captured by Count Guy, that William of Normandy ransomed him from Guy and treated him kindly at first, but that later he was persuaded, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, to make an oath over a box of artfully concealed holy relics in Rouen that he would support William's claim to the English throne.

Now William's claim was based, in the first place, on his blood relationship to Queen Emma, King Edward's mother. But his case rested mainly on his assertion that in 1051 King Edward had promised him the throne on his death. The Norman sources further assert that in 1064 Harold was sent to Normandy by King Edward in order to confirm his earlier promise to William and in order that Harold should swear fealty to him.

Most modern historians believe that King Edward made this promise. Thus Ian Walker writes: "We have seen that it is unlikely that any such promise was given by Edward, but rather that it was probably invented and imparted to William by Robert of Jumièges, Archbishop of Canterbury, following his exile in 1052. If this was the case, could Edward nevertheless have intended to make William his heir at this later date? This is highly unlikely. In 1051 Edward had no clearly established heir, although he did have a number of potential heirs, all with better qualifications than William. Now, he had secured a suitable and established heir in the person of his nephew, *Atheling* Edgar, and a reserve in Harold, the son of his deceased nephew, Earl Ralph. As a result of this change in circumstances the reasons adduced against the nomination of William as heir in 1051 apply with even great force to any such nomination in 1064. He remained a man with only distant links to the English dynasty and little or no support in the country, although he was now secure in possession of his duchy and much more widely known and regarded than in 1051. In addition, William's recent conquest of Maine had resulted in the imprisonment and death of Edward's nephew, Count Walter of the Vexin. Count Walter died in suspicious circumstances while in William's custody, allegedly by poison, something unlikely to endear him to Edward. William of Poitiers hints that Edward was close to death and this was why he now sent Harold to pledge his kingdom. There is no support for this in English sources, which show that the king was still healthy enough to go hunting in autumn 1065. The suggestion that Edward intended William as his heir in 1064 seems less credible even than the case for this in 1051."

Why, then, did Harold make the fateful journey? One Anglo-Norman source

suggests that he was simply on a fishing trip and landed up on the wrong side of the Channel. However, the eleventh-century Canterbury Monk Edmer of Canterbury, using sources close to the family, has a much more plausible story, namely, that Harold "asked leave of the king to go to Normandy to set free his brother and nephew who were being held there as hostages" (Godwin had given these hostages to the king after his abortive coup in 1051). In support of this theory is the fact that Harold did return with one of the hostages, his nephew Hakon. William continued to hold Harold's brother, Wulfnoth…

Edmer continues: "The king replied: 'I will have no part in this; but, not to give the impression of wishing to hinder you, I give you leave to go where you will and to see what you can do. But I have a presentiment that you will succeed in bringing misfortune upon the whole kingdom and discredit upon yourself. For I know that the Duke is not so simple as to be at all inclined to give them [the hostages] up to you unless he foresees that in doing so he will secure some great advantage to himself.'"

The king's prophetic spirit did not fail him; and according to a twelfth-century tradition, a great blow was miraculously struck at the oak in Rouen where Harold made his oath to support William's claim to the throne – an oath, which, since he broke it when he himself became king, led to his and his country's downfall. "For the oak, which was once a tree of great height and beauty, … is stated, wonderful to relate, to have shed its bark, and to have lost its greenness and its foliage. A sight well worth seeing, for a tree which a little time before was remarkable for the number and thickness of its leaves, shrivelled up from the roots, as quickly as did the gourd of Jonah and the olive of that other prophet and all its branches became white."

Just as the Lord's withering of the fig tree signified the falling away of the Jewish synagogue, so the withering of the oak at Rouen signified the falling away of the English Church.

In 1065 a serious rebellion against King Edward's rule broke out in the North. Now the traditionally turbulent Anglo-Danish North had been remarkably quiet during Godwin's rebellion in 1051-52. This had much to do, no doubt, with the firm but just government of Earl Siward; but his successor, Earl Tostig, while no less firm, appears to have been considerably less just.

According to the anonymous biographer, several members of the witan "charged that glorious earl with being too cruel; and he was accused of punishing disturbers more for desire of their property which would be confiscated than for love of justice." But the same author excused Tostig on the grounds that "such… was the cruelty of that people and their neglect of God that even parties of twenty or thirty men could scarcely travel without being either killed or robbed by the multitude of robbers in wait."

However, that there was probably some justice in the accusations appears from the fact that St. Cuthbert once intervened on behalf of a man condemned by Tostig, as Barlow describes in this summary of Simeon of Durham's account: "[Tostig] had succeeded in arresting a man named Aldan-hamal, a malefactor notorious for theft, robbery, murder and arson. The criminal was condemned to death, despite attempts by kinsmen and friends to bribe the earl; and while in fetters at Durham awaiting execution, when all efforts at rescue had failed, his conscience was smitten, he repented of his crimes, and he promised St. Cuthbert that if he could go free he would make full atonement. St. Cuthbert heard his prayer, struck off his fetters, and allowed him to make a lucky escape into the church. The guards, under Tostig's thane Barcwith, went in pursuit and considered breaking open the doors of the cathedral, for freedom of sanctuary, they thought, would allows all thieves, robbers, and murderers to laugh in their faces. But Barcwith was immediately struck down by heaven for his impiety and within an hour or two died raving mad; and Earl Tostig, terrified by his fate, pardoned the criminal and, later, held him in esteem."

The immediate cause of the rebellion appears to have been an extra tax imposed by Tostig on his earldom. Just before the rebellion, in March, 1065, the relics of Martyr-King Oswin of Deira (Durham) had been discovered, and the holy Bishop Aethelwine of Durham had presented Countess Judith, Tostig's wife, with a hair of the holy martyr. Could this have been a prophetic warning not to rise up against the lawful king?

The rebels seized York while Tostig was hunting with the king in Wiltshire, and proceeded to slaughter his officials and seize his treasury. They then summoned Morcar, younger brother of Earl Edwin of Mercia, and with him as their "earl" marched south to plead their case with King Edward, ravaging Tostig's lands on the way. Earl Edwin joined them at Northampton, and there Earl Harold also came as the emissary of King Edward.

Harold was in a most difficult position. His natural desire was to support his brother against the rebels. But that would have led to civil war, which Harold now drew back from, just as his father and King Edward had done during the earlier crisis of 1051-52. In his meeting with the king at Oxford he counselled agreeing to the terms of the rebels. With great sorrow and reluctance, the king complied: Tostig was deposed, the rebels were pardoned and Morcar was confirmed as Earl of Northumbria. In the following month Earl Tostig and his wife fled to her brother, Count Baldwin of Flanders.

Tostig was bitter that the king had not supported him against the rebels. But he especially blamed his brother Harold, claiming that the Northumbrians "had undertaken this madness against their earl at the artful persuasion of his brother, Earl Harold." Harold denied this on oath; and since he gained nothing from the affair except the undying enmity of his brother, who fought against him in 1066, he must be believed.

The most serious result of the rebellion was the breakdown in health of the king, who, according to the anonymous biographer, had wanted to fight the rebels, but had been prevented by bad weather, his inability to raise enough troops and the reluctance of those around him to engage in civil war. "Sorrowing at this, he fell ill, and from that day until the day of his death he bore a sickness of the mind. He protested to God with deep sorrow, and complained to Him, that He was deprived of the due obedience of his men in repressing the presumption of the unrighteous; and he called down God's vengeance upon them…"

In the second half of his reign, as the situation within the country worsened, the holy King Edward turned more and more to heavenly pursuits, and his prophetic gifts manifested themselves in still greater abundance.

Once, at Holy Pascha, the king returned after the Divine Liturgy to his seat at the royal banquet in Westminster. "While the rest were greedily eating," writes William of Malmesbury, "and making up for the long fast of Lent by the newly provided viands, he, with mind abstracted from earthly things, was absorbed in the contemplation of some Divine matter, when presently he excited the attention of the guests by bursting into profuse laughter: and as none presumed to inquire into the cause of his joy, he remained silent as before, till satiety had put an end to the banquet. After the tables were removed, and as he was unrobing in his chamber, three persons of rank followed him; of these Earl Harold was one, the second was an abbot, and the third a bishop, who, presuming on their intimacy with the king, asked the cause of his laughter, observing that it seemed just cause for astonishment to see him, in such perfect tranquillity of mind and occupation, burst into a vulgar laugh while all others were silent. 'I saw something wonderful,' said he, 'and therefore I did not laugh without a cause.' At this, as is the custom of mankind, they began to inquire and search into the matter more earnestly, entreating that he would condescend to disclose it to them. After much reluctance, he yielded to their persevering solicitations, and related the following wonderful circumstance, saying that the Seven Sleepers in Mount Coelius [Ephesus] had now lain for two hundred years on their right side, but that, at the very hour of his laughter, they turned upon their left; that they would continue to lie in this manner for seventy-four years, which would be a dreadful omen to wretched mortals. For everything would come to pass, in those seventy-four years, which the Lord had foretold to His disciples concerning the end of the world: nation would rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there would be earthquakes in divers places, pestilences and famine, terrors from heaven and great signs; changes in kingdoms; wars of the Gentiles against the Christians, and also victories of the Christians over the pagans. Relating these matters to his wondering audience, he descanted on the passion of these sleepers, and the make of their bodies, thought totally unnoticed in history, as readily as though he had lived in daily intercourse with them. On hearing this, the earl sent a knight, the bishop a clergyman, and the abbot a monk, to… the Emperor of Constantinople, giving them at the same time what is called

a holy letter, that the martyr-relics of the Seven Sleepers should be shown to the delegates of the king of England. It fell out that the prophecy of King Edward was proved by all the Greeks, who could swear that they had heard from their fathers that the men were lying on their right side, but after the entrance of the English into the vault, they published the truth of the foreign prophecy to their countrymen. Nor was it long before the predicted evils came to pass; for the Hagarenes, Arabs and Turks, nations averse to Christ, making havoc of the Christians [at the battle of Manzikert in 1071], overran Syria, Lycia and Asia Minor, altogether devastating many cities, too, of Asia Minor, among which was Ephesus…"

Thus the reputation of King Edward, already renowned for his holiness in England and Western Europe, was beginning to spread even to the Orthodox East – whither so many exiled English families would soon have to flee.

On another occasion, as Ailred of Rievaulx tells the story, the king attended the service for the consecration of a church at Havering in Essex. As he was coming out of the church, a beggar met him and asked for alms. Edward did not have any money on him at the time; but since he never liked to send beggars away empty-handed, he gave him the costly ring which was on his finger. Some time later, some English pilgrims were in trouble near Bethlehem in the Holy Land. A beggar came up to them and asked them what the matter was. When they had explained it to him, he helped them. Then he gave them a ring and asked them to give it to their king in England, with a message from St. John that for his chaste life he was to inherit the joys of Paradise in six months' time. Edward received the message with joy, realizing that the beggar to whom he had given the ring was St. John the Evangelist and Theologian. And in six months' time he reposed in peace.

The ring was found again when St. Edward's tomb at Westminster was opened in 1102. A sweet fragrance filled the church, and the body was found to be completely incorrupt.

In 1163 the tomb was opened again. Frank Barlow writes: "They saw, a little obscured by the mortar and dust which had fallen down, the saint wrapped in a cloth of gold, at his feet purple shoes and slippers, his head and face covered with a round mitre, likewise embroidered with gold, his beard, white and slightly curled, lying neatly on his breast. Joyfully they called over the rest of the party, and as they cleared out the dirt from the tomb, they explored everything gently with their hands. To their relief nothing had changed. The body was still intact and the vestments were only a little dulled and soiled. Six of the monks lifted the body, laid it on a carpet, wrapped it in a precious silk cloth, and placed it in a wooden coffin or feretory, which they had prepared. Everything they found with the body was transferred to the new shrine, except the ring, which Laurence [the abbot of Westminster] removed to preserve as a memorial and as a sign of his personal devotion to the saint."

And so the holy king approached his departure from this life. One more public act of his reign remained to be performed: the dedication of his favourite project, the Abbey of St. Peter at Westminster. This act was of great symbolic importance; for according to tradition, the original church built on the site in St. Mellitus' time had been dedicated, not by hand of man, but by angels; and now the last man of truly angelic life in the land of the Angles, the virgin King Edward, came to lay the last stone in the edifice of Anglo-Saxon Christianity. Built to atone for his inability to keep a vow he had made to go on pilgrimage to Rome, it became the last monument of English Orthodoxy before its engulfment by the papist heresy.

A great assembly of men from all parts of the land assembled to celebrate Christmas and then the dedication of the church to Christ. Then, as the Monk Sulcard relates, "on Christmas Eve itself, the most kindly king began to get worse. Concealing the fact, however, he spent Christmas day both in the church and in the palace rejoicing with his nobles. But on the morrow, when he could hide it no longer, he began to rest apart, and sent messengers to bid his court be of good cheer and to carry out the dedication of his monastery through fitting persons."

The dedication of the abbey church took place on Holy Innocents Day, 1065, as the innocent sufferer lay on his deathbed. The anonymous biographer, writing from eye-witness testimony, continues the story: "When King Edward, replete with faith, perceived that the power of the disease was forcing him to his end, with the commendation and prayers of the most important of God's faithful he resigned himself to the funeral rites…

"While he slept those in attendance felt in his sleeping body the travail of an unquiet soul, and woken by them in their terror, he spoke these words. (Up till then, for the last two days or more, weakness had so tired him that when he spoke scarcely anything he said had been intelligible.) 'O eternal God,' he said, 'if I have learned those things which have been revealed to me from Thee, grant also the strength to tell them. But if it was only an illusion, let my former sickness burden me according to Thy will.' And then, as they who were present testify, he used such resources of eloquence that even the healthiest man would have no need of more.

> "'Just now,' he said, 'two monks stood before me, whom I had once known very well when I was a young man in Normandy, men of great sanctity, and for many years now relieved of earthly cares. And they addressed me with a message from God.
>
> "'"Since," they said, "those who have climbed to the highest offices in the kingdom of England, the earls, bishops and abbots, and all those in holy orders, are not what they seem to be, but, on the contrary, are servants of the devil, on a year and one day after the day of your death God has delivered all this kingdom, cursed by Him, into the hands of the enemy, and devils shall come through all this land

with fire and sword and the havoc of war."

"'Then I said to them, "I will show God's designs to the people, and the forgiveness of God shall have mercy upon the penitents. For He had mercy on the people of Nineveh, when they repented on hearing of the Divine indignation."

"'But they said, "these will not repent, nor will the forgiveness of God come to pass for them."

"'"And what," I asked, "shall happen? And when can a remission of this great indignation be hoped for?"

"'"At that time," they answered, "when a great tree, if cut down in the middle of its trunk, and the part cut off carried the space of three furlongs from the stock, shall be joined again to the trunk, by itself and without the hand of man or any sort of stake, and begin once more to push leaves and bear fruit from the old love of its uniting sap, then first can a remission of these great ills be hoped for."'

"When those who were present had heard these words – that is to say, the queen, who was sitting on the floor warming his feet in her lap, her brother, Earl Harold, and Rodbert, the steward of the royal palace and a kinsman of the king, also Archbishop Stigand and a few more whom the blessed king when roused from sleep had ordered to be summoned – they were all sore afraid as men who had heard a speech containing many calamities and a denial of the hope of pity. And while all were stupefied and silent from the effect of terror, the archbishop himself, who ought either to have been the first to fear or give a word of advice, with folly at heart whispered in the ear of the earl that the king was broken with age and disease and knew not what he said. But the queen, and those who had been wont to know and fear God in their hearts, all pondered deeply the words they had heard, and understood them quite otherwise, and correctly. For these knew that the Christian religion was chiefly dishonoured by men in Holy Orders, and that… the king and queen by frequent admonition had often proclaimed this."

King Edward died on January 5, 1066. The first part of his prophecy was fulfilled exactly; for one year and one day after his death, on January 6, 1067, Duke William of Normandy, having been crowned as the first Catholic king of England, set off on the three-and-a-half-year campaign which destroyed the face of the country - the Antichrist had come to England!

Modern historians have accused King Edward of weakness. Humility, gentleness and chastity in the midst of a corrupt and adulterous generation are not properly thought of as signs of weakness, but rather of great spiritual strength and grace. However, let us concede that St. Edward had a certain weakness: like Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II, whom he resembled so closely, his weakness was that he trusted people

too much, and was constantly being betrayed by them.

In 1013 he and his father had been betrayed by the people when they drove him into exile in Normandy. In 1016 the people had again betrayed his brother King Edmund, forcing him into exile again. In 1017 his mother had married his country's conqueror and abandoned him with his brother Prince Alfred in a foreign land. In 1036 his brother had been murdered, and only a few years later, in 1045, he had been forced to marry the daughter of his brother's murderer. He had trusted Archbishop Robert, who was the only man to share his perception of the danger posed by Earl Godwin – but the people forced the expulsion of Robert and the reinstatement of Godwin. He had trusted Earl Harold, but Harold refused to fight against his rebellious brother Tostig. He had trusted the English people when they recalled him from exile in 1043, thereby ending the hated Danish yoke; but the people had often, like the stiff-necked Israelites, longed to return to the spiritual Egypt, as when the Northumbrians demanded a return to the laws of the Danish Canute.

And yet as the English Moses lay on his deathbed there were still a few, those who had been his closest attendants, who wept for him. To these he said, as the anonymous biographer recounts it: "'Do not weep, but intercede with God for my soul, and give me leave to go to Him. For He will not pardon me that I should not die Who would not pardon Himself that He should not die.' Then he addressed his last words to the queen who was sitting at his feet, in this wise, 'May God be gracious to this my wife for the zealous solicitude of her service. For she has served me devotedly, and has always stood close to my side like a beloved daughter. And so from the forgiving God may she obtain the reward of eternal happiness.' And stretching forth his hand to his governor, his brother, Harold, he said, 'I commend this woman and all the kingdom to your protection. Serve and honour her with faithful obedience as your lady and sister, which she is, and do not despoil her, as long as she lives, of any honour she got from me. Likewise I also commend these men who have left their native land for love of me, and have up till now served me faithfully. Take from them an oath of fealty, if they should so wish, and protect and retain them, or send them with your safe conduct safely across the Channel to their own homes with all that they have acquired in my service. Let the grave for my burial be prepared in the minster in the place which shall be assigned to you. I ask that you do not conceal my death, but announce it promptly in all parts, so that all the faithful can beseech the mercy of Almighty God on me, a sinner.' Now and then he also comforted the queen, who ceased not from lamenting, to erase her natural grief. 'Fear not,' he said, 'I shall not die now, but by God's mercy regain my strength.' Nor did he mislead the attentive, least of all himself, by these words, for he has not died, but has passed from death to life, to live with Christ.

"And so, coming these and like words to his last hour, he took the Viaticum from the table of heavenly life and gave up his spirit to God the Creator on the fourth [more accurately: the fifth] of January… Then could be seen in the dead body the glory of a soul departing to God. For the flesh of his face blushed like a rose, the adjacent beard

gleamed like a lily, his hands, laid out straight, whitened, and were a sign that his whole body was given not to death but to auspicious sleep. And so the funeral rites were arranged at the royal cost and royal honour, as was proper, and amid the boundless sorrow of all men. They bore his holy remains from his palace home into the house of God, and offered up prayers and sighs and psalms all that day and the following night. Meanwhile, when the day of the funeral ceremony dawned, they blessed the office of the interment they were to conduct with the singing of masses and the relief of the poor. And so, before the altar of St. Peter the Apostle, the body, washed by his country's tears, is laid up in the sight of God. They also cause the whole of the thirtieth day following to be observed with the celebration of masses and the chanting of psalms and expended many pounds of gold for the redemption of his soul in the alleviation of different classes of the poor. Having been revered as a saint while still living in the world, as we wrote, at his tomb likewise merciful God reveals by these signs that he lives with Him as a saint in heaven. For at the tomb through him the blind receive their sight, the lame are made to walk, the sick are healed, the sorrowing are refreshed by the comfort of God, and for the faith of those who call upon Him, God, the King of kings, works the tokens of His goodness."

St. Edward's body still lies in Westminster Abbey. The papist church celebrates his memory on the day of his repose, January 5, and the day of his translation, October 13.

Holy Father Edward, pray to God for us!

(Sources: *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; Liber Eliensis; Encomium Emmae Reginae;* Florence of Worcester, *Chronicle;* Anonymous, *Vita Aedwardi Regis*; Edmer, *Historia Novorum in Anglia*; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum, Vita S. Wulfstani*; Sulcard, *The History of Westminster*; Ailred, *Vita Sancti Edwardi, P.L.* CXCV, col. 769; Osbert of Clare, *Vita Aedwardi Regis;* Geoffrey Gaimar, *L'Estoire des Engleis; Benedictine Breviary*, October 13, supplement; V. Moss, *Saints of England's Golden Age*, Etna, Ca. Center for Traditionalist Studies, 1997, pp. 59-60, 93-96; *Saints of Anglo-England,* Seattle: St. Nectarios Press, volumes I, II and III; Ian Walker, *Harold, the Last English King,* Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997; Gabriel Ronay, "Edward Aetheling: Anglo-Saxon England's Last Hope", *History Today*, January, 1984, vol. 34, pp. 34-51; J. Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, Cambridge University Press, 1956; A.S. Napier, "An Old English Vision of Leofric of Mercia, *Philological Transactions*, 1908, pp. 180-187; Frank Barlow, *The English Church, 1000-1066,* London: Longmans, 1979; Canon Busby, *Saint Swithun*, Winchester, 1971; Michael Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, London: Dent, 1975; M. Ashdown, *English and Norse Documents*, Cambridge, 1930)

42. SAINT EDWIN, MARTYR-KING OF NORTHUMBRIA

St. Edwin was the second Christian king in England, and the first in the northern English kingdom of Northumbria. He was born in 584 into the royal family of Deira, the son of King Alla of Deira. When his father died, Edwin was cheated out of his kingdom by King Ethelred of Bernicia, who united Bernicia and Deira into a single kingdom of Northumbria.

Edwin fled to East Anglia and took refuge with King Redwald. He married Cwenburga of Mercia, by whom he had two sons. Redwald, because of the threats and promises he had received, was persuaded to give Edwin up to his enemies. Edwin was warned by a friend of the danger he faced. That night, a stranger promised that his kingdom would be restored to him if Edwin would do as he taught him. Edwin agreed, and the stranger laid his hand on Edwin's head, telling him to remember the gesture.

In 616, with the help of King Redwald, Edwin defeated and killed Ethelfrith at the battle of the River Idle, and became king of Northumbria.

After the death of Cwenburga, he sought the hand of Ethelburga, the daughter of St. Ethelbert, the first Christian king of Kent. His suit was initially rejected, but then accepted on condition that Ethelburga was allowed to practice her own religion and that Edwin would seriously consider becoming a Christian. In 625 St. Paulinus was consecrated bishop and sent to York as Ethelburga's chaplain.

There was an attempt on Edwin's life in 626, on the eve of Pascha. That night the queen gave birth to a baby girl, and King Quichelm of the West Saxons sent an assassin named Eumer to kill Edwin with a poisoned dagger. Eumer was admitted to Edwin's presence and tried to stab him. He would have succeeded if it had not been for Lilla, King Edwin's faithful minister, who placed himself between the king and the assassin. The blade passed through his body, however, and wounded the king. The assassin was killed, and Lilla saved Edwin's life at the cost of his own. This event is commemorated by a stone cross which stands on Lilla Howe near Flyingdales Ballistic Missile Early Warning System on the North Yorkshire Moors. Before the Pickering-Whitby road was built in 1759, this cross served as a guide for those who walked across the moors from Robin Hood's Bay to Saltergate.

Edwin thanked his gods that he had been spared, but he was told by Bishop Paulinus that he had been saved by the prayers of his queen. The bishop said that he should show his gratitude to the true God by allowing his newborn daughter to be baptized. The child was baptized on Pentecost, and was given the name Eanfleda.

The king, who had been slightly wounded in the attack, promised Bishop

Paulinus that he would become a Christian if he were restored to health, and if he would triumph over those who conspired to kill him.

As soon as his wound healed, King Edwin marched against the King of the West Saxons with an army. He vanquished the opposing army, killing or capturing those involved in the plot against him. He no longer followed the pagan religion, but he put off his promise to embrace Christianity, in spite of receiving a letter of encouragement from Pope Boniface. He would sit alone for hours trying to decide which religion he should follow. St Paulinus, informed by a revelation about the stranger's promise to the king, went to Edwin and laid his hand upon his head. "Do you remember this gesture?" he asked.

The king trembled with astonishment, and would have fallen at the bishop's feet. St Paulinus gently raised him up and said, "You see that God has delivered you from your enemies. Moreover, He offers you His everlasting Kingdom. See that you fulfill your promise to become a Christian and keep the commandments of God."

King Edwin said that he would seek the counsel of his advisers and urge them to convert with him. He asked them what he should do. Coifi, a pagan priest, said it was readily apparent that their gods had no power. Another person said that this brief life was inconsequential, compared to eternity.

St Paulinus addressed the gathering, and when he had finished, Coifi told the king that the altars and temples of their false gods should be burned. The king asked him who should be the first to profane them. Coifi replied that he should be the first, since he had been foremost in leading their worship. The chief priest of the pagans was not permitted to bear arms or to ride a horse. It was customary that he ride a mare. Coifi, however, asked for a horse and for arms. Mounted on the king's own horse, Coifi threw a spear into their temple, commanding the others to pull it down and set it afire. This place was not far from York, and today it is known as Godmanham.

King Edwin, his nobles and a large number of the poorer people agreed to be baptised by the holy bishop in York at Pascha, 627 in the wooden church of St Peter. St Edwin began the construction of a new stone church, which was completed by his successor St Oswald

Under the leadership of Saints Edwin and Paulinus, the conversion of the north of England to the Christian faith proceeded apace. Moreover, St. Edwin acquired extensive territories in Scotland (the Scottish capital of Edinburgh is named after him), in the West (Anglesey and Man) and even in the south, becoming the overlord of the southern kingdoms except Kent.

The Venerable Bede writes: "So peaceful was it in those parts of Britain under

King Edwin's jurisdiction that the proverb still runs that a woman could carry her new-born babe across the island from sea to sea without any fear of harm. Such was the king's concern for the welfare of his people that in a number of places where he had noticed clear springs adjacent to the highway he ordered posts to be erected with brass bowls hanging from them, so that travellers could drink and refresh themselves. And so great was the people's affection for him, and so great the awe in which he was held, that no one wished or ventured to use these bowls for any other purpose. So royally was the king's dignity maintained throughout the realm that whether in battle or on a peaceful progress on horseback through city, town, and countryside in the company of his thegns, the royal standard was always borne before him. "

However, the British Christian King Cadwalla of Wales rebelled against him, and, combining with the pagan King Penda of Mercia, defeated and killed King Edwin on October 12, 633 at the battle of Hatfield. His sons Osfrid and Eadfrid were also killed. The site of the battle is said to have been near Doncaster. However, according to another tradition, it took place in Sherwood forest, Nottinghamshire. There, in a clearing in the forest, he was secretly buried. By the time his friends had returned to collect the body for a proper royal burial in York, people were calling him St. Edwin. A small wooden chapel was erected on the spot where he was first buried, which is now in the town of Edwinstowe.

"The head of King Edwin," writes Bede, "was carried to York and subsequently placed in the church of the blessed Apostle Peter, which he had begun to build, but which his successor Oswald completed…"

St. Edwin's widow, Ethelburga, fled back to Kent, where her brother, King Eadbald, gave her the site of a ruined Roman villa at Lyminge. There she founded a monastery, serving as its abbess until her death in 647. She is commemorated on late church calendars on April 5 or September 8.

St. Edwin is commemorated on October 12.

Holy Martyr-King Edwin, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, II, 5, 9-18, 20, III, 1; "St. Mary's Church, Edwinstowe"; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 126; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 46-47; Holy Cross Monastery)

43. SAINT EDWOLD, HERMIT OF CERNE

Our holy Father Edwold was the brother of Martyr-King Edmund of East Anglia. When St. Edmund was killed by the pagans in 869, the people asked Edwold to take his place on the throne. However, Edwold secretly longed to be a hermit, and refused.

After much fervent prayer it was revealed to him that he must look for a place called "Golden Fountain". There he would find rest. But it was not revealed to him where this place was.

Having given his lands to the Church, and everything else he owned to the poor, the saint set out to look for "Golden Fountain" through many lands. But he was not able to find it. Eventually he returned to England, and there, at what is now Cerne Abbas in Dorset, he found a shepherd boy who told him that there was a fountain nearby called "golden". Having arrived at the spot, which was about four miles from the future monastery of Cerne, he placed his staff on the summit of the steep hill. Immediately it sprouted branches and green leaves. An ash tree marked the spot for centuries. Then he built a humble, confined cell where he lived for many years in fasts, vigils, prayers, tears and struggles against demons.

During this time, the saint had as his servant and the only person who knew of his life there, that same shepherd who had pointed out the Golden Fountain to him. Three times a week he would bring him some barley bread and sometimes a little milk. Each time he would receive a golden denarius as the reward of his labours. But he was warned not to betray his presence to anyone. "The day on which you betray me," he said, "will be the last on which you will receive this gift".

Much time passed, and the shepherd told some men where the man of God was. The next day he received his coin together with the prophecy: "Accept this payment today for the last time: as I told you before, since you have betrayed me, this is the last time." The shepherd departed in confusion. The following day, August 29, he came back in desperation – but received no reply. For the saint had passed away. Seeing this, the shepherd raised a great cry and called some men who were nearby. A priest arrived and buried the man of God in his cell.

Many miracles were wrought through the intercession of St. Edwold after his repose. A lame man who washed in the fountain and prayed there was healed. A woman blind from birth who washed there was also healed and received her sight. Many blind, deaf, dumb and lame people, and people suffering from various diseases, received healing in a similar manner. And a

column of light was often seen extending from the tomb of the man of God into the heavens, illuminating the whole area.

Many years later, therefore, it was suggested by St. Dunstan that the relics of St. Edwold should be raised from the earth under the supervision of Bishop Elfmar and conveyed to the Episcopal see of Sherborne. But they could not be moved from their place! Then the bishop and the people prostrated themselves and prayed earnestly. One of those present was Alderman Elfmar. He suggested that, if the saint thought fit, his bones should be conveyed to Cerne. After they had prayed to God about this, it was as if the coffin itself wished to be transported. So the body of St. Edwold was transported to Cerne on August 12, and placed in the church of the Most Holy Mother of God, Mary. Many miracles were wrought there, and Elfmar founded a monastery there in 987 dedicated to St. Peter, endowing it with many possessions.

In the time of King Canute in the early eleventh century, the Danes completely devastated the shrine of St. Edwold. But as they were doing this they were punished in a fitting manner. Four of them were struck blind, and the others went mad or suffered other punishments.

St. Edwold is commemorated on August 29 and August 12.

Holy Father Edwold, pray to God for us!

(Sources: C. Horstman (ed.), *Nova Legenda Angliae,* Oxford, 1901, vol. 1, pp. 362-364; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum;* David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 126-127; http://www.sacred-destinations.com/england/cerne-abbas-augustines-well.htm; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, p. 212)

44. SAINT EGWIN, BISHOP OF WORCESTER

Our holy Father Egwin was born of royal stock in the region of Worcester. When he came of age, he left the world and embraced the monastic life, wherein he soon achieved a high standard of excellence. He was ordained through all the degrees of the priesthood, and in 693, on the repose of the bishop of Worcester, he was elected to the episcopal see by all the clergy and the people, and with the assent of King Ethelred of Mercia and the archbishop of Canterbury. In this exalted position he showed himself to be a pattern of all virtue: a father of orphans, a protector of widows, a righteous judge of the oppressed and comforter of the afflicted. And by his powerful preaching many were converted from paganism or from an evil way of life.

The righteous, however, must expect tribulation in this world, and malicious tongues began to wag against the saint. He decided to travel to Rome and put his case before the highest tribunal in the West. But before leaving, and although he was innocent of the charges brought against him, he imposed a severe penance upon himself both for his own sins and for the sins of the people. He locked his feet in iron fetters and threw the key into the river Avon. Thus bound, he set off on the arduous journey to Rome.

As he and his companions were passing through an arid region of the Alps, they began to thirst. Those among his companions who did not acknowledge the bishop's sanctity asked him mockingly to pray for water as Moses once did in the desert. But others, who did believe in him, rebuked the unbelievers and asked him in a different tone, with true faith and love. The saint prostrated himself in prayer to the Lord with his companions. On arising, they saw a pure stream of water gush forth out of the rock; whereupon everybody, believers and unbelievers alike, gave heartfelt thanks to God Who is wondrous in His saints.

When they arrived in Rome and had prayed in the church of St. Peter, the saint told his companions to go down to the river Tiber and see if they could catch a fish. They did as he said, and to their delight caught a medium-sized salmon which they brought to the holy father. When he saw it he gave thanks and ordered them to slit it open. Great was their astonishment when they found inside the fish the key which the saint had cast into the river Avon! News of the miracle spread throughout Rome, and from all sides the faithful came to seek the holy man's blessing.

Pope Constantine, who had heard of Egwin's arrival, the great labours of his journey and the miracle of the key, did not allow the saint to prostrate before him, but himself asked his blessing. And for the rest of his stay in Rome he treated him with great respect, celebrating the Divine Liturgy with him and having many private talks with him. The case against the saint was examined and annulled, and

he returned to England laden with honours. The people greeted him with joy, and by the decree of the archbishop he was restored to the see from which he had been dismissed. King Ethelred, too, received him with love, ready to give whatever the saint might ask for.

One of the saint's first requests was to be granted the pastureland beside the Avon where he had thrown the key into the river. One of the king's shepherds, Eof or Eoves by name (whence the name “Evesham”), had once had a vision at this same spot, in which a Virgin of extraordinary splendour appeared holding a book in her hands and chanting psalms in the company of two other virgins. When the shepherd told this to the saint, he turned it over in his mind for a long time, praying to God with vigils and fasting. Then, early one morning, after the saint and three companions had spent the whole night in prayer, they set out barefoot to the spot, chanting psalms and hymns. Parting company with the others, St. Egwin fell to the earth with tears and groans. On arising from his prayer, he saw three virgins, of whom the middle one was most wondrous to behold, shining in light and surrounded by an ineffable fragrance. In her hands she held a book, and a cross which shone with a golden radiance. When Egwin realized that this was the Most Holy Mother of God, she, as if approving his thought, blessed him with the cross and disappeared.

This vision gave the saint to understand that it was God's will that this place, later called Evesham, should be dedicated to the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary. And he determined to build a church there in accordance with a vow he had made during a period of especially fierce temptation. So he bought the land and carried out the task to completion, endowing the foundation with many gifts from the English kings. At his request, the Pope granted his foundation stavropegial status, which was confirmed by a council of the English Church held at Alcester in 709.

In 711 the saint retired from his see and devoted himself exclusively to the government of his monastery at Evesham. With fastings and vigils, with tears and groans, he poured out his prayers to the Lord, and was accounted worthy of many visitations of the angels and the saints. He was particularly devoted to the Mother of God, whose praises were always on his lips.

Already rich in years and Divine Grace, he fell ill in the monastery which he had founded, and, feeling the approach of death, he called together the brethren and said: "Most reverend and beloved sons, I beseech you, be zealous in observing the commandments of God, and keep the vow which you made to Him. For it is written: 'Make your vows and pay them to the Lord.' And as the Apostle says: 'Follow peace and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.'" Then, having commended them to the Father and having partaken of the Body and Blood of the Lord, he departed this life on December 30, 717.

Great was the sorrow of the brethren and all the people. But during the burial of the saint, sorrow at his departure was mixed with joy at his triumph. And after his burial many miracles proved that St. Egwin had obtained great favour with the Lord. On praying to him, the blind were given their sight, the deaf their hearing, the sick in body and soul were healed. And so his fame spread throughout the country, and many came to his tomb to seek his intercession.

Once a penitent, grieving over a serious crime he had committed, bound himself with a number of iron fetters. He vowed that he would not loose himself from them until God had shown him that he was loosed from the fetters of his sins. He dragged himself to several shrines of the saints, and after diligent prayer and fasting all but one of the fetters broke.

However, the ninth fetter was fastened more tightly than the others, so that the flesh around it began to swell. In hope of being released from this one, too, the unfortunate man travelled to Rome, to the tombs of the holy Apostles. There, after heartfelt prayer, he was told in his sleep: "Go to England and seek the place of the blessed bishop Egwin, and when you have given him due veneration, you will obtain mercy." Joyfully, the penitent set off on his journey, and, arriving at the church of St. Egwin, spent several days there in prayer and fasting. One day, after the brethren had chanted the third hour and celebrated the Divine Liturgy, the ninth fetter snapped with such force that all the brethren heard it, and the penitent himself was thrown some distance as if by the hand of a man. When the brethren ascertained the truth of the miracle, they rejoiced and gave glory to God.

On the death of King Harold I in 1040, the abbot of Evesham, Bishop Alfward of London, took part in an embassy to bring Canute's other son, Hardicanute, to the English throne. As they were crossing the Channel to Flanders, a fierce tempest arose such that even the sailors were close to despair. Bishop Alfward turned in prayer to St. Egwin, begging him to free them from their peril, and promising that if God showed them mercy through his prayers, he would make a new reliquary for the saint and cause his feast day to be celebrated with even greater honour. No sooner had he made this petition than the sea suddenly became calm, and they shortly reached their port of destination. The bishop was true to his word. A splendid reliquary of gold and silver was prepared, and the translation of St. Egwin's relics took place on September 10.

A few years later, a craftsman named Godric was working on this shrine, carving little figures onto it with his scalpel. Suddenly the scalpel he was holding in his right hand went through his left, causing blood to flow. In his distress Godric cried: "O Saint Egwin, am I not here in your service? If you have any care for the service of a wretched sinner, display it now!" Immediately the wound was miraculously healed with no pain or trace of blood.

There was a woman by the name of Algitha who during the reign of King Edward used to frequent the church of St. Egwin and who, for love of the saint, wished to acquire a part of his relics. So she bribed some boys to steal it secretly. Coming by night, they opened the reliquary and stole a part of the arm of the saint and one of his teeth. Then they brought the relics to the woman, who joyfully stored it away among her own things. That night St. Egwin appeared to her in a vision and told her to return the relics, saying that they had been unjustly taken away. She ignored his command, whereupon he appeared to her a second time. But when she in her greed persuaded herself that these visions were demonic phantoms, St. Egwin appeared to her a third time and sternly ordered her to return the relics. When she refused he replied: "Before the sun rises, you will regret your obstinacy in disobeying my commands." The woman rose from her bed blind, and so she remained for the rest of her life. However, she went to Abbot Manny and asked him to let her have the relics, promising that she would make a reliquary of gold and silver in their honour. She also promised that after her death St. Egwin and his servants would receive some of her land. So much for the woman. As for the boys, God punished them severely. One drowned in water, while another was afflicted with a painful illness for the rest of his life.

Near Canterbury there lived a man who had been dumb from his mother's womb. While still young, he decided to go to Rome to venerate the tombs of the holy apostles. On arriving, he prayed for three years for the healing of his infirmity. But having received no cure, he was sorrowfully contemplating the possibility of never being healed when a man in shining white vestments appeared to him in the night and said: "Why have you been lying here for so long to no avail? Go back to your native land of England, look for the monastery of St. Egwin, go there with an offering, and when you have prayed to God and that saint you will be immediately healed." The man obeyed this command and with God's help arrived at St. Egwin's monastery. It was a Saturday, and all the brethren were standing in the choir during Vespers when the man came up to the altar with a candle in his hand. After praying for a long time he offered the candle, and then again stood in prayer. Suddenly blood began to flown from his mouth and onto the pavement. When the Vespers prayers were over, Prior Avicius and some of the senior brethren came up and asked him what the matter was and why he was lying there coughing up blood. So the man stood up in the midst of the brethren, and, stretching out his hands and lifting up his eyes to God, he said: "Thus have I been helped by Almighty God and my lord St. Egwin, through whose prayers Christ has worked a miracle in me the wretched one, as I shall tell you truly." Then he told them the whole story from the beginning. When he had finished, the brethren rejoiced, and, bringing together the people, they all sang the Te Deum.

There was a man who had been ill for a long time with a horrifically swollen and tumerous foot and leg, so that he had to be supported by crutches on both

sides. One day he came to the relics of St. Egwin and prayed fervently to God and the saint. The brethren were at that time in the choir, and one could see the fearful hope on their faces as they prayed for the poor man's recovery. Suddenly the intent silence was broken by the sound of the sick man throwing away his crutches, falling to the ground and then joyfully jumping up again, completely healed. Amidst general rejoicing he left his crutches by the holy altar and returned home praising God.

A leper whose whole body was disfigured by the disease sought St. Egwin's intercession. His prayer was answered, and you could see the scab come clean off his body like a shield. Many others were healed through St. Egwin: the blind, the deaf, the mute, the lepers, the paralytics; and many who were bound with fetters saw them struck off and bounding a long distance away, filling the whole church with clatter.

Once a monk of Coventry name Sperckulf, a man of very ascetic life (he sometimes fasted for four or six days continuously), came as was his custom to the feast of St. Egwin, and was spending the night in hymns and prayers in the crypt dedicated to the saint. While he was chanting the psalms of David, he saw the doors of the crypt open and an unearthly light descend into it, chasing away all shadows. Then an extraordinarily beautiful procession of saints met his fearful gaze. First came some boys carrying candles, then deacons, then some older men with shining white hair. These were all dressed in white vestments. At the rear came a person dressed in indescribably beautiful pontifical vestments whom two of the older men were escorting, one on either side. Going up to the altar of St. Egwin, they chanted Mattins with great reverence, followed by the Divine Liturgy, which was celebrated in the normal manner with wonderful grace. Then came the canonical Hours. Finally, the whole company processed out the church in the same order in which they had entered.

Another night, the same monk was keeping vigil in the church of the Mother of God. Suddenly all the doors of the church opened of their own accord and he saw with extraordinary clarity a procession entering in the same manner as before, but with St. Egwin this time escorting the Holy Virgin. Coming up to the altar dedicated to her, St. Egwin proceeded to celebrate Mattins and the Divine Liturgy most beautifully. Sperckulf, who was watching with great trepidation, was also amazed to see some monks of Evesham whom he had known and who had reposed some time before. Going up to one of them, he asked him who it was for whom the Liturgy was being celebrated. "Be quiet," he replied: "Don't you know that our lord St. Egwin is celebrating the sacred mystery to the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary?" Terrified by this reply, Sperckulf returned to his place and waited to see what would happen. At the end of the Liturgy and the service to the Mother of God, two bishops escorted her, one on either side, while the procession went out as it had come in, in great glory.

St. Egwin is commemorated on December 30, and the translation of his relics on September 10.

Holy Father Egwin, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Vladimir Moss, "Saint Egwin of Worcester", *Orthodoxy America*, December, 1985; W.D. Macray, *Chronicon Abbatiae de Evesham*, Rolls series, 1863, pp. 36-38, 44-53; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 127-128; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 323-324)

44. SAINT ELGIVA, QUEEN OF ENGLAND AND ABBESS OF SHAFTESBURY

Our holy Mother Elgiva was married to King Edmund of England (921-946), and was the mother of Kings Edwy and Edgar. She was renowned for her almsgiving, her wise counsel and her gift of prophecy – she correctly interpreted a prophetic dream in which the careers of her grandsons Kings Edward the Martyr and Ethelred the Unready were intimated, together with the pagan invasions that came near the end of the century. She founded the monastery at Shaftesbury, where she died and was buried in about 954. "Innumerable miracles" testified to her sanctity. It was in her monastery that the relics of her grandson, St. Edward the Martyr, were discovered in the later twentieth century.

St. Elgiva is commemorated on May 18.

Holy Mother of Elgiva, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Ethelweard, *Chronicle*; William of Malmesburgy, *Gesta Regum Anglorum,* 13; *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum,* II, 86; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 128)

45. SAINTS ERKENWALD, BISHOP OF LONDON, AND ETHELBURGA, ABBESS OF BARKING

Our holy Father Erkenwald was of noble blood and imbibed the Christian Faith early in life, learning at the feet of St. Mellitus, bishop of London. Later, he founded two monasteries, one for men and women at Barking under his sister St. Ethelburga, and the other for men at Chertsey, where he was himself the abbot. Grassy mounds can still be seen marking the buildings of the ancient monastery of Chertsey.

On the repose of St. Cedd, bishop of London, in 664, Erkenwald was elected bishop in his place, and was consecrated by St. Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury. His life, according to the Venerable Bede, both before and after his consecration to the episcopate, was holy and adorned by miracles. Thus the horse-litter in which he used to be carried when sick cured many illnesses; chips of it, when carried to the sick, would immediately restore them to health.

Again, the bishop was once going to preach to the people when one of the wheels of his two-wheeled carriage left its axle. However, the carriage did not stop but continued to run smoothly, the side without a wheel being supported invisibly in a miraculous manner.

St. Erkenwald was a great peacemaker, helping to end the quarrel between St. Wilfrid, bishop of York, and St. Theodore, which had split the English Church.

When Erkenwald was building his monastery at Barking for his sister, Ethelburga, he came across a beam which was too short for the structure. Taking it into their hands, the holy brother and sister lengthened it by their prayers until it was equal to the others. However, Erkenwald did not immediately entrust the monastery to his sister, but persuaded the holy Hildelitha to come from Chelles in France and become the first abbess.

Bede relates that "in this monastery many miracles were wrought, which have been committed to writing by many, from those who knew them, that their memory might be preserved and following generations edified..."

Once a pestilence was raging in the men's part of the monastery, and St. Ethelburga consulted with the nuns where they should bury the bodies of the nuns when they, too, would begin to be struck down. One night, just as they had finished their psalm-singing, and had gone out to the tombs of the monks, a great heavenly light far brighter than the sun descended upon them, terrifying them all. Then it moved to the south of the monastery, stayed there for a time, and then disappeared. In this way the nuns understood where their own cemetery should be built.

There was little three-year-old boy named Esica living in the monastery for his education who was suddenly seized by the pestilence. Just before he died he cried "Edith! Edith! Edith!" - the name of one of the nuns. That very moment the nun called Edith was seized by the same pestilence and died later the same day.

At about midnight one of the nuns who was ill shouted out that the candle next to her bed should be put out. She shouted this many times, but no one paid any attention. At length, she explained that the house was filled with such a great light that the candle itself seemed dark, and that the candle could go on burning because a man of God who had died that same year had appeared to her and told her that she would depart for the heavenly light at dawn. And, sure enough, she died as soon as the day appeared.

There was a nun in the monastery by the name of Tortgith, who greatly assisted St. Ethelburga in the government of the monastery. She had been ill for nine years. At dawn one day, she came out of her cell and saw a human body brighter than the sun wrapped in a sheet being lifted up to heaven by golden cords. Her interpretation of the vision was that one of the community would soon die and be lifted up to heaven by the golden cords of her good works. And, sure enough, in a few days the virgin abbess, St. Ethelburga, reposed in the Lord, about the year 675. She is commemorated on October 11.

Another nun, who had been suffering from a painful paralysis of all her limbs for several years, on hearing that St. Ethelburga's body was being carried into the church, asked to be carried there. Then, bowing towards the body, she entreated her to pray that she be delivered from her terrible pain. Twelve days later she died.

Three days after that, Tortgith, being very ill and unable to speak, suddenly looked up to heaven and conducted the following conversation with an invisible interlocutor. "Your coming is very acceptable to me, you are welcome!" Then, after a while she said: "I am not happy with this." Then again: "If it cannot be today, I beg the delay may not be long." Then again: "If it is determined thus and cannot be changed, I beg that it be deferred no longer than this coming night." On being asked who she was talking to, she said: "With my most dear Mother Ethelburga". After a further day and night, she reposed in the Lord.

St. Ethelburga had been in the process of building a church to the whole company of the Apostles when she died. After her death she was buried in the place she had designated for herself, but the building work on the church was interrupted for seven years. Then the monks decided to abandon the building altogether, but to transfer the body to another, already finished and consecrated church dedicated to St. Stephen the Protomartyr. On opening her tomb, they found the body incorrupt. A Saxon archway from the saint’s original monastery still

survives in All Hallows church, City of London.

The next abbess, St. Hildelitha, who died in about 712, transferred the bodies of all the monastery's dead to the church of the Mother of God, where a heavenly light and a wonderful fragrance were often perceived. Once a noblewoman who lived near who had gone completely blind some years before was taken by her two maids to the tomb of St. Ethelburga. Having prayed there, she arose with her sight completely restored, and returned to her house without the aid of her maids.

St. Erkenwald reposed in peace on April 30, 693, at the monastery of Barking, and was buried at his cathedral church of St. Paul in London.

An anonymous twelfth century writer described his repose thus: "When blessed Father Erkenwald came by the Providence of God to Barking, he was seized by the serious illness which ended his temporal life. Foreknowing the imminent dissolution of his body, he called his sons and instructed them all with sound admonition; and, commending them to God with his blessing, he gave up his spirit in their arms. At his passing a fragrance of such wonderful sweetness filled the cell in which he lay that it was as if the whole house was filled with balsam.

"When the clergy of London and the monks of Chertsey heard that the holy man of God had passed over from this life, they quickly came to take away his body. But when the nuns saw that they wanted to take the holy body away, they resisted, saying that the holy body ought most worthily to be buried there, since he had been the founder of that place. In opposition to this, the monks of Chertsey replied: 'He was our abbot, and he will be ours now that he is dead, and we have come to take his body away with us. For we know that he founded your church, but he founded our monastery first and established us there, and was then made abbot by God's will.' But then the clergy and the people of the city of London, impatient with this contest, abruptly replied to them both: 'In vain do you strive, for neither will you have him, nor is it right for you to have him: but if the custom which was preserved in antiquity and came to us from Rome is preserved, he will have his tomb in the city in which he was consecrated bishop by God's decree.'

"Meanwhile, while they were saying these things, the common people of London ran up, and with God's consent took the body of their bishop away with them. Both the monks and the nuns followed the body of the blessed man with tears and groans. When they had left the monastery, a very great tempest arose with wind and rain, evidently to declare the merits of the man. The tempest was such that hardly anyone could bear it, and there was no miracle in the fact that the burning candles which had been placed round the bier of the blessed man were extinguished by it. And so those who were following the most holy body in this tempest came to the river Lea, where they doubtless thought to cross. But when they arrived there, they found that the river, of itself so great and deep, had swelled

to overflowing because of the wildly rushing waters, so that anyone who wished to cross there would have been quite unable to without the help of a boat. But there was neither a boat nor a bridge to cross over. And when the monks and nuns saw this, they cried: 'Alas, alas, now we see the injury you have done to us with regard to the body of this most holy man.' And the nuns said: 'Truly the Lord is showing through this excessive flood where He has ordained that this man should be buried and rest. Which is why you must take great care to abandon your plan with all possible speed, and return the body to the place destined for it by God, lest by your importunity and greed you offend God and incur some unheard-of damage. For the reason why the Lord sent him to us while he was still living in the flesh and strengthening us spiritually with many exhortations, was that we should at least have his most famous and holy body after his passing over. But you, with no fear of God, and with the greatest violence, have cruelly invaded our territory; and like hungry wolves you have broken into the sheepfold, seeking, seizing and tearing up whatever you could find, and when you had found it devouring it. And here you have savagely and menacingly rushed in upon us, and have even, to crown it all, despoiled our church of such a great man. May the Almighty God judge between you and us!'

"On hearing this, the citizens of London replied as follows: 'For a long time we have patiently put up with your reproaches and quarrels, putting in no objection. But one thing we know for certain, and we would have you to be no longer in any doubt about it: neither will you ever have him, nor will you ever see us deflected from our course by any fears, nor will you rejoice in any harm suffered by us because of this. You know that we are not like wolves, but are strong men and brave in battle, and we shall not be slow in attacking, subduing, undermining and overthrowing even the most strongly defended and highly populated cities, rather than give up the servant of God and our patron. For it is certainly through him that we and all the people of London, with all its territories, and above all the metropolitan church which he ruled in holiness and truth for a long time - with him as our advocate, we believe and are firmly convinced that we shall be delivered and saved, by the mercy of God, from all attacks of our enemies, both in the present and in the future. And so we wish such a glorious city and such an assemblage of people to be strengthened and honoured by such a patron.'

"Meanwhile, while the whole people was in uproar over the possession of the holy treasure of this sacred body, a certain religious and erudite man, who had been trained by the bishop himself, full of the Holy Spirit, climbed to a high place, and having called for silence, began this speech: 'Your desire is praiseworthy and acceptable to Almighty God, in striving to have the guide of your souls in your possession. But you have departed too far from the rule of truth in coming to this holy work with feuds and hatred. For it is written, since charity is the fulfilling of the law, and he who offends in one thing - that is, in charity - is guilty of all, if you quarrel and are at odds with each other, how will God accept the sacrifice of your

prayers, when you offend Him? For, as the Holy Scriptures testify, God is love. So preserve the unity of love with one mind and beseech the Creator of the universe on bended knees that He deign to reveal where He wishes the relics of His precious saint and our patron to be placed.'

"Everyone voluntarily agreed with this speech and exhortation: the clergy led the litanies and psalmody with groaning while the people of both sexes, both small and great, prostrated themselves on the ground, beseeching the mercy of God with tears and sighs, that He would by His Divine Grace end this great dispute by some sign. As the Psalmist says, the Lord is near to all who call on Him in truth, and will hear their petition. For while with one mind they called on the Lord and sweated with their faces to the ground, the wave of the river divided, and showed them a dry path for their feet, just as once the waters of the Jordan dried up when the children of Israel entered the promised land, or as when Elijah, who was counted worthy to be enthroned in peace while still in the flesh, crossed over with dry feet. When they saw this, they joyfully glorified God, and with great reverence lifted up the bier and crossed over in concord, and made their way to the river Stratford.

"There they stopped for a while, for the place was beautiful, clothed with flowers and greenery, while the people went on ahead a little. Then lo! for a second time God Who is wondrous in His saints revealed a miracle, which should not be omitted here. For just when the cloudy tempest had been lulled, and the rain-bearing clouds were becoming fewer and smaller, and the reddish rays of the sun were generating heat, the candles round the bier were lit from heaven. When inquiry had been made whether anyone had brought a flame, they recognized that it had been by Divine power, and leaping for joy they praised the majesty of the Lord and glorified Him. And springing up, they made for the city of London. And when those who were in the city learned of the coming of the holy prelate, they came out to greet him with hymns and songs, rejoicing in an indescribable manner that their city had been exalted by the relics of such a venerable pastor. And as many as touched the bier of the holy man were freed from whatever infirmity they had; and every day health was restored to the sick at his tomb, to those who sought it with a right heart, to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus a certain noble from London had a daughter who was good-looking but lame. Because of this infirmity, her parents judged it better for her to go to a convent. Therefore the girl was entrusted to Abbess Alwina of Barking. But the virgin continued in prayer at the tombs of Saints Erkenwald and Ethelburga, promising that if she were restored to health she would dedicate her life to God. Then one night St. Ethelburga appeared to her and told her not to be despondent because she would soon be healed. But she was to increase her prayers to St. Erkenwald because her healing would come through his intercession. A little later, while the nuns were singing Mattins one day, this virgin was overcome by sleep at the tomb of St. Erkenwald. While she was sleeping the saint appeared to her in

great glory, took her by the hand and said: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, arise, and as Peter and John raised the lame man, so will you be raised." Immediately, to the sound of a great crack, the virgin awoke and sprang up, crying: "Holy Father Erkenwald, have mercy, have mercy."

The relics of the saint escaped the fire of 1087 and were buried in the crypt of St. Paul's. In 1148 and 1326 there were further translations to new shrines in the church. Miracles were reported there until the 16th century.

Holy Father Erkenwald and holy Mother Ethelburga, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*; *Ex praef. Cod. MS. B. F. 20. a. ac ex Cod MS. in bibl. Cotton. Claudius A.V.*; *Nova Legenda Anglie*; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 134, 137; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 53-54, 58-59)

46. SAINT ETHELBERT, MARTYR-KING OF EAST ANGLIA AND ST. ETHELDRITHA, HERMITESS, OF CROWLAND

St. Ethelbert was a direct descendant of the first Christian king of East Anglia, Redwald. His father was Ethelred the king, and his mother, also of noble stock, was called Leofruna. He was born, and reborn through the Mystery of Holy Baptism, in the year 779.

Having led a pious life from his childhood, St. Ethelbert succeeded to the throne on the death of his father. However, since he was young and without heirs, the court feared that he would fall prey to a foreign ruler; so they suggested that he choose a bride worthy of the royal rank. But he deferred his assent, saying that he had wished to lead a virgin life. Eventually, however, he bowed to the will of his counsellors; and, at the suggestion of an experienced man named Oswald, it was agreed that he should seek the hand of **Etheldritha**, the daughter of King Offa of Mercia. Only the Dowager-Queen Leofruna objected to this plan; for she feared the cunning of King Offa and the deceitfulness of the Mercians. But he said that he would abide by the decision of the whole council and go to Mercia. She then prophesied that he would remain a virgin and be martyred, which would in turn lead the king's daughter to enter God's service as a nun.

As Ethelbert was mounting his horse at the beginning of his journey, the earth shook, terrifying the soldiers who accompanied him. Then they prayed to the Lord for the king and for themselves. The Dowager-Queen again expressed her fears. "But God's will be done," she said, "God's will be done." Then there came another sign from heaven. Suddenly, in the middle of the journey, the sun, which had been shining brilliantly, was so darkened that the counsellors who were travelling with the king could not see each other and recognized each other by the sound of their voices alone. "To our knees," cried the king to his stupefied counsellors, "let us pray to Almighty God that He may have mercy on us." No sooner had he finished speaking than the air became completely clear. Joyfully the king chanted: "Blessed be the name of the Lord from henceforth and for evermore." And then he added: "It is no little joy for travellers to have poems sung for them. So anyone who sings for us will receive the king's armlet." Immediately two men skilled in chanting took up a psalm with joy. They received their reward from the king.

The party was put up for the night in the royal villa of Sutton Walls (Hereford and Worcester), where the king, in a vision of the night, saw everything that was to happen to him. For he saw the royal palace with its roof fallen in, and the Dowager-Queen weeping, and the garment he was wearing soaked in blood. In the middle of the royal city was a great beam, long and wide, reaching up to the sky, with blood flowing from its eastern part as if from a wound. But

towards the south was a shining column of light extending to heaven. And he himself, changed into a bird, with golden wings outstretched, covered the whole beam, and flew above it, and heard a sweet-sounding voice coming as if from the throne of the All-Holy Trinity.

That was the vision. Then the king asked the above-mentioned Oswald what it might mean. He replied: "Through the mercy of God the Father, O king, everything will turn out well for you."

When the two kings met, they exchanged gifts, though Offa's was given with guile. For he had heard a rumour that Ethelbert was intending to invade his kingdom, and so was filled with despondency. The next day Ethelbert hastened in his innocence to the guileful Offa. It happened that the king's daughter Etheldritha saw him. Impressed, she said to her mother: "I think that he is worthy to be preferred to the king my father in all things."

This angered her mother, who went to Offa and said: "The rumour you heard is now shown to be true, O king. Ethelbert is coming with a band of soldiers, determined to receive your daughter as his wife whether you like it or not. If you do not take precautions, he will invade your kingdom and expel you. Rise, take counsel with yourself and your men, and say, 'Half my kingdom to him who delivers him up to be killed'."

Aroused by these evil words, the king promised a great reward to the man who would trick Ethelbert into entering the king's bedchamber. Then avarice entered the heart of one Winbert, and he said to the king: "No one will more easily carry out your commands, O king, than I. For King Ethelbert knows me, and will be certain to think of me as of a most trustworthy person. He will believe my words and yield to my counsel."

And so, as the holy king descended from his horse, Winbert greeted him with a traitor's kiss. And when the king said that he desired a suitable time and place in which to have a peaceful talk with King Offa, Winbert replied: "A messenger has already informed him of your arrival. He was told that the most worthy king of the East Angles wanted to visit him. And he said, 'Whatever he desires of me he will obtain.' But he is ill today." "Let us go to King Offa," said the king. "It is not right," replied Winbert, "to go in to the king armed, when it is a time of peace. So disarm, O king, and enter in that way with your nobles." So the holy king went in to the evil king with only a few nobles. The door was shut, and immediately they pounced on him from all sides, bound him and tortured him. Finally he was beheaded with his own sword by Winbert. Thus did the king, innocently destroyed on earth, ascend to the Heavenly Kingdom as a martyr.

The royal virgin Etheldritha saw the king's dead body, and was horrified at the crime which had been prepared by her mother. "Why, O impious mother, did you rage against the innocent? You sharpened your tongue against him whose sacrifice is to be mourned by all good men, that tongue which you will shortly tear to pieces by the just judgement of God. And now the blood which has been innocently shed threatens your destruction. Let no further messenger announcing the embrace of a bridegroom come to me. I will offer my virginity to God. I think that I shall go to the island of Crowland, where I shall serve the Lord of all as a hermitess. And by the mercy of God I shall see him whose destruction on earth I lament crowned with glory and honour in the heavens."

And so the holy virgin set off for Crowland, where, renowned for the prophetic gift with which the Lord had endowed her, she reposed in peace in the year 835. She is commemorated at Crowland on August 2.

Meanwhile, the counsellors returned to East Anglia and announced the news to Leofruna. She sorrowed greatly, but was also not a little comforted. For she knew that her son had gone to Christ through his glorious martyrdom.

The holy king was martyred at a place called Marden, four miles from Hereford. King Offa now ordered the martyr's head and body to be thrown into a marsh by the river Lugg as quickly as possible. But when his servants came to lift the body they were amazed by its extraordinary lightness, and would not have carried out the king's command if they had not been so terrified of his wrath. And when they threw the body into the marsh, a great column of light reached to heaven, lighting up the night and revealing the glory of the martyr.

Astonished by this miracle, Offa was led to repentance. In great fear, he ordered a tenth of all his possessions throughout the kingdom to be sold. "Who knows," he said, "whether the Divine majesty will not be appeased, and greatly lessen my well-deserved punishment!"

On the third day after his passion, the holy martyr Ethelbert appeared in a vision to a former chamberlain of Offa's named Bertferth, and told him to go immediately to the river Lugg where a light would point out his body. Rising from sleep, Bertferth saw his chamber filled with light and him whom he had seen in his sleep only a little while before as if going out over the threshold of his house and seeking his body's resting-place. Praising God, Bertferth rushed to arouse a certain Egmund, and asked him whether he had seen the light. When he said that he had not, Bertfert told him the vision, and said that the saint had ordered him to find his body, wash it, place it on a cart drawn by two oxen and take it to Hereford. He persuaded Egmund to help him, and the two, led by a light, found the body, washed it and wrapped it in linen. It took them somewhat longer to find the head, which was untainted by any odour of corruption.

Having placed it in the cart, they set off for the designated place.

But then, in order that the glory of the martyr should be made manifest, the head fell off the cart. For just at that moment a very poor man who had been blind for eleven years was groping his way through that area. His stick struck the head, whereupon he stopped, bent down, felt the head, and, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, realized who it was. Then, prostrating himself and raising the holy head, he cried with faith: "O holy Ethelbert, the impious King Offa destroyed you: have mercy on me and by your pious intercession grant me sight." Immediately his sight was restored to him. Joyfully thanking God, he hastened with the head towards the cart that was carrying the body. He caught up with the men at a place called Shelwick. "Stop, Bertferth, stop," he cried. Then he told them about the miracle. Bertferth and his companion were terrified by this tale, and marvelled that the head had fallen from the cart without their noticing it. But they saw in this the hand of God, and, joyfully praising the Lord, they brought the holy body to the place that the martyr had pointed out as his resting-place. There a column of light was seen on several occasions, and thither the faithful flocked from all sides, praying to be healed from all manner of illnesses through the saint's intercession.

The coffin bearing the martyr's body came to rest a short distance from its final resting-place in Hereford cathedral. There a holy well appeared which can be seen to this day. The water is used to heal eye infections and ulcers.

A certain king living in a distant region by the name of Milfet heard that the holy martyr-king was being glorified by many signs. Filled with love for the saint, he wanted his kingdom to be strengthened by the saint's intercession. So he summoned a bishop and ordered him to go to the place where the martyr's relics lay and inquire whether the report was true. The bishop came and found the place resounding to the sound of the saint's miracles and all the people joyfully praising God for them. Then the king sent rich gifts for the building of a monastery there.

The holy Martyr-King Ethelbert was martyred, probably on May 20, his feastday, in the year 794. According to one report, his body remained at Hereford until it was burned by the Danes in 1050, while his head was translated to Westminster. In the early twelfth century, however, William of Malmesbury said that the relics were still at Hereford.

Holy Martyr-King Ethelbert, pray to God for us!

(Sources: M.R. James, "Two Lives of St. Ethelbert, King and Martyr", *English Historical Review,* XXXII, 1917, pp. 214-244; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, A, E, F, 792; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press,

1978, pp. 137, 139; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 271-272, 273-274)

47. SAINTS ETHELDREDA, SEXBURGA AND ERMENHILDA, QUEENS AND ABBESSES OF ELY, AND HUNA, PRIEST-HERMIT OF HONEY HILL

Our holy Mother Etheldreda (Audrey) was born at Exning in Suffolk in about 636 to the good King Anna of East Anglia and his wife Hereswytha, the sister of St. Hilda. King Anna and his wife had two sons, Adulph and Jurmin, and five daughters - Etheldreda, Sexburga, Ethelburga, Saethryda and Withburga - all of whom are counted as saints of the Church.

In 653 or 654 King Anna and his son Prince Jurmin were killed in battle against the pagan King Penda of Mercia at Bulcamp near Blythburgh in Suffolk. St. Jurmin is commemorated on February 23. Queen Hereswytha then received the monastic tonsure and went to live in a monastery near Paris.

In about 652 Etheldreda was given in marriage by her father to Tondbert, the alderman of the South Gyrwas, who gave her the Isle of Ely as a dowry. He was at that time 16 years old, and she - 30. During the three years of their marriage, Tondbert honoured Etheldreda's desire to remain a virgin. But he was killed by the pagan King Penda of Mercia at about the same time Etheldreda's father King Anna was also killed.

The saint then entrusted her estate to her faithful steward Ovin. He came to the monastery with an axe, and when not meditating on the Holy Scriptures was always doing manual labour. He died in 670, and the marker stone of his shrine can still be seen in Ely cathedral. It contains the inscription: "O God, grant Thy light and Thy rest to Ovin."

Etheldreda then prepared to receive the monastic tonsure. However, her uncle Ethelwold wanted her to marry the fifteen-year-old King Egfrith of Northumbria. Again, in 660, she submitted to the marriage, and again her bridegroom honoured her desire to remain a virgin. However, several years later, when King Egfrith came into full possession of his kingdom, he made great efforts to persuade her to change her mind. St. Wilfrid, metropolitan of York, the holy virgin's spiritual father, told the Venerable Bede that the king had promised him land and money if he could persuade his wife to consummate the marriage. Eventually, after twelve years of unconsummated marriage, Egfrith acceded to her repeated request and allowed the holy virgin to receive the monastic tonsure at the hands of St. Wilfrid in the monastery of Coldingham. The abbess of the monastery at that time was St. Ebba.

However, the king changed his mind and set out for Coldingham with the intention of bringing Etheldreda back. Thomas of Ely writes: "The Queen, going forth secretly with two handmaids of God, Sewenna and Sewara, came to a lofty hill situated not far from the monastery which she ascended [Colbert's Head].

There the sea leaving its natural channel and pouring out its waters abundantly surrounded the hill on which the holy virgins had taken refuge; and so we are told by the inhabitants of the place, for seven whole days while they continued in prayer and fasting the tide protected them, and - what is still more wonderful - forgetting its natural ebb, it tarried there as long as the king remained. And so, the handmaiden of Christ, secured on her rocky eminence, escaped the wrath of the king and suffered no harm from him." Egfrith then withdrew and took another wife, Ermenburga.

Continuing on her journey to Ely, Etheldreda lay down in a quiet resting place sprinkled with flowers of many colours and fresh with sweet scented grasses. On awaking, she found that her staff, which she had fixed in the ground at her side, dead and dry, had put forth branches clothed with green bark and bearing leaves. She then left it in the ground, and it grew to become a large ash tree. The place where it grew came to be called Etheldreda's Stow. A church was built there to commemorate the miracle.

Passing on through Winteringham and Alftham, where she built a church, the saint came to her domain of Ely in 672. At first she wanted to rebuild the half-ruined church built by St. Felix at Cratendune. But then she decided to build a new monastery a mile away, near the river, where the cathedral now stands. The foundation was laid in 673; it was financed by her brother King Adulph and the architect was St. Wilfrid. When it was completed St. Wilfrid installed her as the first abbess.

She was like a mother to her nuns, training them by the good example she herself provided of the monastic life. The Venerable Bede writes that she had only one meal a day, was a great lover of solitary prayer, and wore woollen garments. She would seldom bathe except on the eves of great feasts, and then she would first bathe all the others in the convent, and wait on them as a servant, before washing herself last. Men and women of noble families would place themselves under her guidance, and bring their children to the monastery for their education. She worked many miracles, and demons would flee not only when she was present or spoke, but even at the mere invocation of her name when she was absent.

The saint prophesied not only that she would die of the plague, but also the number of those in the monastery who would die of the same disease. She was afflicted by a large tumour growing on her throat, for which she earnestly thanked God, saying: "I know for certain that I very much deserve to be afflicted with this suffering in my neck, for in my youth I adorned myself with many neck-chains, and now I think God in His justice is cleansing me of my sin. For now I have this swelling which shines instead of the gold, and this scorching heat instead of the sparkling gems."

There was a certain doctor there by the name of Cynefrith, who lanced the tumour; and for a time the saint's condition improved. But the pain returned, and on the third day, June 23, 679, she reposed in peace. She was buried, as she had commanded, in the cemetery in a plain wooden coffin.

Our holy Mother Sexburga was another daughter of King Anna and a sister of St. Etheldreda. She married King Erconbert of Kent, from whom she had two sons, who later became kings of Kent in succession to their father, and two holy daughters, Ercongota and Ermenhilda. She founded a monastery at Minster-in-Sheppey, where she retired as abbess after the death of her husband in 664.

"When the monastery had been built," we read in an Old English manuscript, "an angel of God came in a vision of the night and announced to her that in time a heathen people [the Danes] would conquer this nation of ours. She had then held the kingdom for thirty years to deliver it to her son Hlothere. And she bought from him his share of the district, Sheppey, so that it should be free for the uses of the monastery as long as Christianity would be maintained in England."

Having obtained privileges for her monastery from the Pope (as did her sister Etheldreda for Ely through St. Wilfrid), Sexburga resigned the government of the monastery, handed it over to her daughter Ermenhilda and hastened to Ely to place herself under the direction of her sister. The sisters greatly rejoiced at their meeting, and in 679, on the death of Etheldreda, Sexburga became abbess of Ely.

In 695 she wanted to translate the relics of her holy sister into the church. Then she sent the monks to looks for a suitable stone for a coffin, for in the fen-country of East Anglia there are few hewn stones. They rowed to Grantchester, and God immediately granted them success; for coming to the small abandoned town of Grantchester, they found, near the town walls, a white marble coffin of exquisite workmanship and covered with a lid of the same kind of stone. Giving thanks to God, they brought it back to the monastery. When the grave was opened, the body of St. Etheldreda was found to be completely incorrupt, as if she had died that very day. The doctor Cynefrith removed the veil covering her face and found to his astonishment that the incision which he had made in the tumour had healed up, leaving only a slight scar. The linen in which the body had been buried was also as if new, and at the touch of it many demons were expelled and diseases healed. Also, the coffin in which she had originally been buried was reported to have cured people with diseases of the eyes who pressed their eyes to it. After the virgin's body had been washed, and clothed in new garments, it was brought into the church and laid in the coffin that had been brought from Grantchester. It was found to fit her exactly, with the stone hollowed out at the head as if made for the head of the holy virgin.

The translation of the relics of St. Etheldreda took place on July 6, 695, and on

the same day some four or five years later St. Sexburga died. She was succeeded by her daughter St. Ermenhilda, who had married King Wulfhere of Mercia and borne him a son, Kenred, and a daughter, St. Werburga. After Wulfhere's death in 675 Ermenhilda became a nun at Minster-in-Sheppey under her mother Sexburga. When her mother went to Ely, she became abbess at Minster; and when her mother died, she succeeded her as abbess at Ely. She died on February 18 in an unknown year.

In 869, one of the Danish invaders tried to take hold of the pall which covered the still incorrupt body of St. Etheldreda and struck the marble tomb with his battle-axe. But a splinter flew back from off the ground and entered his eye, and he fell dead. At this, the others left the tombs of the other saints, which they were thinking of violating, and fled.

During the tenth century the monastery of Ely was restored, and priests were introduced from other regions to perform the Divine services. "One of these," writes William of Malmesbury, "being more presumptuous than the rest, tried - not, I think, with an honest mind - to stir up his fellows to make themselves more certain about the incorruption of the virgin's body. These placed before themselves the danger of the thing, but he approached. First he put a candle through the hole that the blow of the Dane had made and put it next to the virgin, trying as far as he could to search out everything. Then he tried to draw to himself the clothes with which the holy body was wrapped. And he had already drawn a part through when the virgin, angered that her naked body should be seen by a good-for-nothing, violently pulled back the clothing into the tomb, so that he was thrust onto the earth on his back. Because of this he was ever after weak, and even suffered somewhat from dementia. The hole was filled with stone and cement by St. Ethelwold the bishop, who threw out the priests and introduced monks."

In 1106 the bodies of Saints Etheldreda, Sexburga, Ermenhilda and Withburga were translated again.

Miracles continued to take place at their shrines. We shall describe one of them. In the 12th century there was a man who vowed that if he were restored to health he would become a monk. On being restored to health he was going to fulfil his vow, but was accused of seeking to escape retribution for certain robberies. On being imprisoned in London, he fervently prayed to Saints Benedict and Etheldreda. It is said that they appeared to him and at St. Benedict's touch his chains fell away. On hearing about the miracle, Queen Matilda ordered that the case be investigated. Eventually the man was released and became a monk in Ely, where the broken chain hung as witness to the intercession of the saints.

The incorrupt left hand of St. Etheldreda can still be seen in the Roman Catholic church in Egremont street in Ely. A part of her other hand can be seen in the church

of St. Etheldreda in Holborn.

St. Huna was the personal chaplain of St. Etheldreda, by whom he was greatly honoured as a man of very strict and holy life, and whom he was counted worthy to bury. After her death he retreated to a solitary island in the fens, called Huneya, now Honey Hill in Chatteris, where he lived as a hermit until his blessed repose. Many miracles of healing were wrought at his tomb. In the tenth century his tomb was opened and his relics were translated to the monastery of Thorney.

St. Etheldreda is commemorated on June 23 and October 17, St. Sexburga on July 6 and October 17, and St. Ermenhilda on February 13 and October 17. St. Huna is commemorated on February 13.

Holy Mothers Etheldreda, Sexburga and Ermenhilda, and Holy Father Huna, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*; Abbot Aelfric, *Life of St. Aethelthryth* (10th century); William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum* and *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*; MS Lambeth 427 (tenth century); *Liber Eliensis*; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 135, 138-139, 355-356, 200; Trevor Bevis, *Fenland Saints and Shrines*, March: Westrydale Press, 1981; Ian Thompson, *St. Hybald of Hibaldstow,* Bluestone Books, Scunthorpe; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 48, 61-62, 105-106, 116, 142, 289; Barbara Cooper, "The Lives of the Female Saints of Ely", *Catholic Life,* December, 2009, pp. 22-23)

48. SAINTS ETHELFLEDA AND MERWENNA, ABBESSES OF ROMSEY

During the reign of King Edgar the Peaceable in the tenth century, there was a certain nobleman by the name of Ethelwold who was in particular favour with the king on account of his virtue. So he gave to him in marriage a beautiful lady related to his wife, Queen Elfrida, by the name of Brichgiva. This couple had several children; and before the birth of her last daughter Brichgiva saw in a dream a ray of glorious sunlight break out above her head - a sign that she would give birth to a child of light. In due time she gave birth to a daughter who was baptized with the name of Ethelfleda.

As she increased in years, Ethelfleda increased also in holiness. Noticing this, on the death of her father King Edgar gave her into the hands of Abbess Merwinna of Romsey. Merwinna was the first abbess of Romsey after its refounding in 967. She brought up Ethelfleda as her own daughter, and always kept her in attendance. And the holy daughter followed the holy mother in all things: generous in almsgiving, constant in vigils, humble in mind, joyful in countenance, and kind to the poor. Indeed, she loved the poor so much that when others were not looking she would hide the food she was given in the refectory in her sleeves and then secretly give it them.

She was particularly constant in attending the canonical hours in church, and would not be prevented from this even by illness. Once, when it was her turn to read, she received the blessing and went up to the pulpit. But by Divine Providence her light was extinguished, while the fingers of her right hand gave out a wonderful brilliance with which she was able to read easily.

It happened once that her teacher went into a plantation of saplings which was near the house where Ethelfleda with the rest of the young girls was accustomed to study. The teacher cut some saplings with which to beat the girls, and hid them under her clothes. But Ethelfleda saw what she was doing, even though a stone wall separated them. Scarcely had the teacher crossed the threshold as she was returning from the house than the saint cast herself at her feet with tears, saying:

"Don't beat us with switches. Why do you beat us when we gladly carry out your commands?"

"Get up," said the teacher, "and show me how you know that I have brought some switches."

"I saw you under the tree," said the saint, "and you are still holding them under your cloak."

Now Ethelfleda had the custom of leaving the dormitory every night and secretly immersing herself in the cold water of a stream, praying and chanting psalms. One night the queen, who as protectress of all the English convents was visiting Romsey, and who used to keep the saint in her chamber, saw her leaving to practise her customary asceticism. Following her, she saw her make the sign of the cross and spring into the water. The queen screamed loudly and fell to the ground as if she were out of her mind. Ethelfleda prostrated herself to the ground weeping and praying, until the queen was restored to health.

In 993, the pagan Danes burned Romsey Abbey and drove out the nuns. However, Abbess Elwina was warned in a vision about the impending disaster, and so was able to carry the abbey's valuables to safety.

In about the year 1003, St. Ethelfleda became abbess, and immediately gave all the convent's money to the poor. When the bailiffs came to examine the accounts, they found all the money gone. But then the saint prayed, and lo! the coffers which had previously been empty were found to be miraculously full.

St. Ethelfleda reposed in the Lord on October 23 in about the year 1016. She was buried outside the church, as she had directed. But when miracles multiplied at her tomb, she was translated into the church, together with St. Merwinna, on October 29. This day then became the day of their joint commemoration.

Holy Mothers Merwinna and Ethelfleda, pray to God for us!

(Sources: A fourteenth-century chronicle in H. Liveing, *Records of Romsey Abbey*, 1906; Rev. David Shearlock, *Romsey Abbey*, p. 7; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 139; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 22-24)

49. SAINTS ETHELRED AND ETHELBRICHT, MARTYR-PRINCES OF KENT

The holy princes Ethelred and Ethelbricht were the sons of King Ermenred of Kent and his queen Oslaf. When still young they were committed into the care of their cousin King Egbert, who became king in 664, and his queen, St. Sexburga. Their innocence and holiness of life offended one of the king's counts, Thunor, who feared that if the young princes lived long they would supplant him in the king's favour. So he began secretly to hate them, and to accuse them before the king, saying that if they lived they would deprive either him or his children of the kingdom. And he began to entreat the king for permission to kill them. But the king refused, for they were dear to him and his family. Nevertheless, Thunor secretly killed the young princes one night in the king's palace and hid them under the foundations of the royal hall at Eastry under the king's throne, thinking that no-one would think of looking for them there.

However, when the king at dawn saw a beam of light penetrating the roof of the hall up to heaven, he ordered Thunor to appear before him and asked him what he had done with his cousins. Thunor answered that he knew where they were, but would not tell him unless he had to. But when the king adjured him by their friendship to reveal the secret, he told him that he had buried them in the king's hall under his throne. Then the king was very disturbed, and after building a shrine for the princes, he summoned his counsellors and asked them what he should do. They, with the support of St. Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, advised that the princes' sister, Ermenburga (also known as Domneva), be summoned from Mercia, where she had been given in marriage, so as to fix the compensation due to the relatives of the princes for their murder. She fixed the compensation at eighty hides of land in the isle of Thanet.

Now when Domneva and the king had gone to Thanet, he asked her to choose which part of the land she wanted in compensation. She replied: as much land as her deer, which always ran in front of her when she travelled, would run round. The king agreed, and they set off after the deer until they came to the place which was later called Thunor's leap.

Then Thunor bowed to the king and said: "Sir, how long will you listen to this dumb animal, which will run round the whole of this land? Will you give it all to the queen?" At that moment the earth opened and swallowed him up. According to another account of his death, “Thunor could not at length contain his passion, and declaring that the deer was bewitched, set spurs to his horse to overtake and kill it. But in jumping over a well or ditch his mount stumbled and both horse and rider fell in and were drowned.”

Domneva ultimately received a grant of 1000 acres from her kinsman, to the

west of which, close to where the church of St. Mary now stands, she erected a monastery. Hence the name of the present village, Minster-in-Thanet. Domneva became the first abbess.

The bodies of the martyr princes were translated to Wakering in Essex and then, in 980, to Ramsey Abbey by St. Oswald of Worcester.

Holy Martyr-Princes Ethelred and Ethelbricht, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Byrhferth of Ramsey Abbey, writing about 1000 and drawing on an Old English manuscript of the eighth century; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum;* David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 140; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, p. 115; Christine Waters, "'The Crown of Kent's Royal Race'. St. Mildred and her Kinsfolk (part 1)", *Catholic Life,* January, 2007, pp. 54-55)

50. SAINT ETHELRED, MARTYR-KING OF WESSEX

St. Ethelred came to the throne of the kingdom of Wessex on the death of his brother Ethelbert in 865. His reign was short and full of sorrows and suffering. Early in 871 the Great Army of the Vikings, having completed the conquest of East Anglia, crossed the Thames and entered the kingdom of Wessex. In two preliminary battles near Reading, the Christians were victorious, but then suffered defeat. Then under the leadership of King Ethelred and his younger brother Prince Alfred, they advanced to meet the Vikings at Ashdown.

Bishop Asser describes the ensuing battle thus: "The Vikings, splitting up into two divisions, organized shield-walls of equal size (for they then had two kings and a large number of earls), assigning the core of the army to the two kings and the rest to all the earls. When the Christians saw this, they too split up the army into two divisions in exactly the same way, and established shield-walls no less keenly. But as I have heard from truthful authorities who saw it, Alfred and his men reached the battlefield sooner and in better order; for his brother King Ethelred was still in his tent at prayer, attending the Divine Liturgy, and declaring firmly that he would not leave that place alive before the priest had finished the Liturgy, and that he would not forsake Divine service for that of men. And he did what he said. The faith of the Christian king counted for much with the Lord, as shall be shown more clearly in what follows…"

Thanks to the piety and courage of King Ethelred, who fought against the two pagan kings, and of Prince Alfred, who fought against the earls, the Christians won a famous victory – the first over the Great Army. But it was not sustained. After another defeat at Basing, King Ethelred suffered a mortal wound and died after Pascha, on April 23, 871. A plaque can be seen where his grave was at Wimborne Minster.

Holy Martyr-King Ethelred, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Bishop Asser, *Life of King Alfred,* chapters 37-38; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 871)

51. SAINT ETHELWIN, HERMIT OF ATHELNEY

Our holy Father Ethelwin (Ailwin) was the brother of King Cenwalh of Wessex and founder of the Abbey of Athelney in the seventh century. He suffered from illness all his life. However, after his death he worked many healings for those who sought his intercession.

(Sources: William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, II, 92; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 140)

52. SAINT ETHELWOLD, BISHOP OF WINCHESTER

Intimations of Glory

Our holy Father Ethelwold (Aethelwold) was born in Winchester in about the year 912. When he was still in his mother's womb, as Abbot Aelfric relates, "it seemed to her that she was sitting in front of the door of her house and that she saw a lofty banner whose top seemed to touch the sky. Bowing reverently, it surrounded the pregnant woman with its fringes. Similarly, while she was sleeping that same night, she saw as it were a golden eagle come out of her mouth and fly away. It was so big that the whole city seemed to be overshadowed by its gilded wings."

The child was baptized and called Ethelwold. Once, on a certain feast day, his mother was at home holding the child in her lap. She wanted to go to church, but a wind arose that was so strong that she was unable to fulfil her intention. Then she set about praying earnestly. And suddenly she found herself sitting with the child in church during the Divine Liturgy.

As a boy, he was introduced into the court of King Athelstan, where he learned many useful things. But his mind was set on heavenly things. And so he was at length ordained to the priesthood together with St. Dunstan by St. Alphege, Bishop of Winchester.

After a period of instruction under St. Alphege, Ethelwold submitted himself in obedience to St. Dunstan at Glastonbury. As Wulfstan writes, Ethelwold "profited greatly from Dunstan's teaching, and eventually received the habit of the monastic order from him, devoting himself humbly to his rule. At Glastonbury, he learned skill in the liberal art of grammar and the honey-sweet system of metrics… He was eager to read the best-known Christian writers, and was in addition constant in his vigils and prayer, taming himself by fasting and never ceasing to exhort his fellow monks to strive for the heights. He remained in obedience to St. Dunstan until his death.

It was while Ethelwold was prior of the monastery at Glastonbury that St. Dunstan had a prophetic dream about him. Wulfstan, a pupil of Ethelwold's at Winchester, relates that Dunstan was sitting outside the monastery dormitory when he saw "a certain tree as if it were of wondrous height. It seemed to spread its branches east, west, north, and south, over the entire region of Britain, astonishingly extensive in its length and breadth. The branches of this tree were laden with countless cones, large and small, while the tree itself bore at the very top a huge cone which, rising above, protected the others with the covering of its scales, and surpassing them all together with its great height, touched the very sky. But the man of the Lord, Dunstan, very astonished by such a vision from above, questioned the elder adorned with white angelic hair, who was pointing this tree out to him, and said: 'I beseech you, venerable elder, what is this strong and lofty tree whose branches spreading out far and wide

seem to support so many countless cones?' The elder answered him: 'This tree which you see, Abbot Dunstan, represents the site of this island; moreover, the great cone which rises on the pinnacle of this tree represents your monk Ethelwold who serves Christ devoutly in this monastery. Now the other cones with which these branches appear laden represent the multitude of monks who are to be instructed by his learning and who are to be gathered together in this area from all regions for the service of Almighty God. Under his leadership they will reach the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven and the fellowship of the blessed spirits who reign with Christ.' Having received this reply, the holy man awoke and reflected silently upon the vision, and afterwards made it known to the faithful by a true account. The report of the vision, spreading with the passage of time, became known to many and at length came also to my humble notice.

"And it was also no less fitting," continues Wulfstan, "that another dream be fulfilled which Ethelwold, the holy man of God, once related to me concerning himself, saying: 'I thought that I was standing by the sea shore where it seemed to me that there appeared a certain great ship, in which there was contained a plentiful number of fish, especially eels, heaped up from the bottom to the top. And when I silently considered the meaning of this vision which I saw, I suddenly heard a voice calling me by my own name, and saying to me: "Ethelwold, Ethelwold, this command has been sent to you by God from heaven: Call forth those fish, with which the ship that you perceive is filled, and bring it about by your prayers that they may be men, just as they were before." Thereupon, complying with this command I stood before them to pray and overcome with a shower of tears, I said sighing: "Lord Jesus, for Whom nothing is impossible, look favourably upon these souls deceived by diabolical trickery, who have been alienated from the slimy mud of this world. I beseech Thee, Good Jesus, do not allow the enemy of the human race to glory in his triumph over them, but grant that, through the almighty power of Thy Name, they may be restored to life, so that, escaping the sleep of eternal death, they may acknowledge Thee as the true and only Saviour of the world, and thereafter, always fleeing towards the peaceful gate of salvation, may be rescued from all dangers of the world and remain secure under Thy governance. For it is Thine, O Christ, to make the dead live, and to restore to its former glory Thine own image which Thou hast created. Thou camest into this world to save sinners and having suffered the dreadful punishment of death on the Cross, Thou didst deign to pour forth Thy precious Blood for the salvation of us all." When I uttered these and similar words of prayer with a remorseful heart and spirit of humility, behold the fish which I had seen before covered in the filthy mud and in the waters of misery, I suddenly saw made into men and revived from death. There arose from the ship and proceeded hastily to land a great multitude of men, many of whom I had known personally. One man among them who fell behind was transformed again into an eel. Without doubt he was that Athelstan, who had long ago been ordained priest with me, and whom thereafter I had been unable to rouse by any means or to bring it about that he might become a man. Indeed, all the others with one accord raised their voices to heaven, clapping their hands and offering thanks to Almighty God because

through His ineffable mercy and my insignificant coming, they were worthy to be recalled from death to life and to be restored to human reasoning which they had lost. But I, rejoicing in God and wishing them joy, awoke, and thus I recall this vision for you, my children, so that with the labour of good works you may persevere in the holy purpose; whereby, through the grace of God, you are able to be counted in the number of those who have been entrusted to me, although I am unworthy, so that they may be freed from the unclean abyss of this world and be saved in eternal blessedness without end.'"

Abbot of Abingdon

After some time, the saint wished to go overseas to Cluny to learn more about the monastic life. However, the Dowager-Queen Elgiva, King Edred's mother, was against this (Ethelwold later sent the monk Osgar to Fleury instead of himself); and she persuaded her son to give Ethelwold the derelict monastery at Abingdon, together with a large area of land to support it. And so, with St. Dunstan's blessing, the saint went to Abingdon, and set about rebuilding the monastery. He was ordained as abbot at the king's request.

"Under Aethelwold," writes Andrew Prescott, "Abingdon grew into a 'glorious minster'. One of his first actions was to establish a school, and the future King Edgar studied there. Aethelwold's reputation for sanctity and strict observance attracted men from all over the country to follow the monastic life at Abingdon. He established contact with reformers on the Continent, and sought to ensure that observance at Abingdon was in line with the most up-to-date Continental practice. Monks from the reformed monasteries at Fleury and Corbie came to Abingdon to instruct their English counterparts in the forms of chanting. The monastery's endowments were substantially increased, particularly by gifts of royal land. A magnificent new church was built, furnished in the most sumptuous fashion. A twelfth-century description of the church states that 'the chancel was round, the church itself was also round, having twice the length of the chancel. The tower also was found.' It has been suggested that this means that the church was an aisled rotunda, recalling the royal symbolism of the palatine chapel at Aachen. Aethelwold himself is said to have built the altar table, which was made of gold and silver, decorated with the sculpted figures of the twelve apostles. It cost the enormous sum of three hundred pounds. Also attributed to Aethelwold was a gold-plated wheel which supported twelve lamps and from which were suspended little bells. Other treasures of the church included three crosses of gold and silver, each four feet in length, and texts to adorn the church made of silver and precious stones. Most of these treasures were destroyed or dispersed after the Norman Conquest [in 1066]…"

Once, as Abbot Aelfric relates, "the king came to the monastery to plan himself the structure of the buildings, and he measured out all the foundations of the monastery with his own hand, exactly as he had determined to erect the walls. Then the abbot

invited him to dine in the refectory with his men. The king agreed immediately; and since there were several Northumbrians with him at the time, they all came with the king to the feast. The king was merry, and ordered mead to be supplied in abundance to the guests, having closed the doors so that no one could hurry away and leave the drinking at the royal banquet. The whole day the servers drew drink for the revellers in full measure, and yet a span's depth remained until the Northumbrians were swinishly drunk and withdrew in the evening."

Once a brother named Elfstan (the future Bishop Elfstan of Ramsbury) was ordered by the saint to provide food for the builders of the monastery. He very zealously prepared meat every day for the workmen, and personally served them, kindling the fire, fetching water and cleaning the vessels, while the abbot thought that he did all this with the help of a servant. One day, while the abbot was wandering around the monastery as was his custom, he saw Elfstan standing by a boiling cauldron, preparing food for the workmen. Then, entering the kitchen, he saw all the vessels spotless and the floor swept. Going up to Elfstan, he said joyfully: 'My brother, you have robbed me of this obedience which you practise without my knowledge. But if you are as much of a soldier of Christ as you seem, put your hand in the boiling water and draw out a bit of food for me from the bottom.' Without hesitating, Elfstan put his hand to the bottom of the cauldron and drew out a hot morsel, feeling no heat from the boiling water. When the saint saw this, he ordered Elfstan to put down the food and reveal the miracle to no one.

Another time, the saint was working on the building when a huge post fell on him and threw him into a pit, breaking nearly all his ribs on one side. If the pit had not received him, he would have been completely crushed. However, with the help of God he recovered.

Bishop of Winchester

On November 29, 963, before the building at Abingdon was completed, Ethelwold was consecrated Bishop of Winchester by St. Dunstan at the king's request.

On arriving at his see, Ethelwold found the Old Minster occupied by secular clergy, who, as Wulfstan writes, "were involved in wicked and scandalous behaviour, victims of pride, insolence and riotous living to such a degree that some of them did not think fit to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in due order. They married wives illicitly, divorced them, and took others; they were constantly given to gourmandising and drunkenness.' With King Edgar's permission, he expelled these clerics, and replaced them with monks from Abingdon. "Now it happened," writes Abbot Aelfric, "that while the monks who had come from Abingdon were standing at the entrance to the church, the clerics inside were finishing the Divine Liturgy and singing the communion hymn: 'Serve ye the Lord with fear, and rejoice in Him with trembling. Lay hold of instruction, lest at any time the Lord be angry, and ye perish from the

righteous way.' As if they were saying: 'We could not serve God, nor observe His discipline; you at least act so that you not perish like us.' And the monks, hearing the singing, said to each other: 'Why are we waiting outside? Look, we are exhorted to enter.'"

St. Ethelwold also came, together with a thegn of King Edgar's called Wulfstan of Dalham. Wulfstan gave the clerics the royal ultimatum: either give place to the monks or become monks yourselves. The clerics, no lovers of the monastic life, decided to leave, although three of them, Edsige, Wulfsige and Wilstan, later accepted the monastic tonsure.

"Such ruthless action," writes Prescott, "in pursuit of introducing new standards of religious life earned Aethelwold enemies, and there was afterwards at least one attempt to murder him. According to Wulfstan, the expelled canons plotted to poison Aethelwold and recover their old places. They poisoned Aethelwold while he was entertaining guests in his own hall. He managed to stagger to his bed, but became completely paralysed. [However,]… by bringing to mind declarations of Christ, such as that 'if believers drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them', Aethelwold found that the pain and paralysis caused by the poison gradually disappeared. He returned to the hall showing no signs of his terrible experience. The canons, recognising that they could not defeat Aethelwold, fled."

However, they had not yet given up the fight. They appealed to the king, who in turn referred the matter to St. Dunstan, who then asked the king to convene a Council in Winchester. This took place in about the year 970 in the presence of the king and queen, nobles and clergy. The final decision was announced by St. Dunstan: 'This Old Minster was founded as a habitation for monks. Let those who benefit from its revenues live henceforth as true monks.' It is said that during the Council, when the possibility of restoring the secular clergy to the Old Minster was being discussed, a cross spoke from the wall: 'Far be it from you! You have done well; to change again would be wrong.' Besides this, the Council decided on the establishment of a slightly modified form of the Rule of St. Benedict, the *Regularis Concordia* (Agreement of the Rules), for all the monastics of England. Up to that time, there had been different versions of the rule in different parts of the country. But now a single Rule was agreed on to ensure that "all be of one mind as regards monastic usage… lest differing ways of observing the customs of one rule and one country should bring their holy conversation into disrepute'. The monks were to be under the patronage of the king, and the nuns – of the queen.

King Edgar supported Ethelwold's reforms in Winchester, not only in the Old Minster, but also in the New Minster, as well as in the women's Nunnaminster.

"The three abbeys," writes Eleanor Duckett, "stood on adjoining lands, the New Minster a little to the north of the Old, and the Nuns' Minster a little on the east.

Trouble was constant among them. They were jealous of possessions; they disputed the lines of their boundaries; they declared respectively that they could not sing their office in the proper manner because of the noise of chanting from their monastic neighbours. King Edgar at Aethelwold's petition issued an order for an exact division among them and even tore down the houses of private citizens nearby in order that space might be given for the monks of Winchester 'for living more peacefully in God's service, removed from the clamour of townspeople'. Such action was hard for the townspeople, yet Aethelwold in the end also did them untold good. With extraordinary imagination and practical skill he made his engineers and their workmen conduct a sorely needed supply of water by channels through the streets of Winchester to cloisters and to private homes alike."

The influence of the holy bishop extended far beyond the bounds of the see of Winchester. Through his efforts, and with the help of King Edgar, three great monasteries of Eastern England, Peterborough, Ely and Thorney were revived; he placed his monk Godeman as abbot in Thorney. Land was bought and cleared, abbots of stricter discipline imported, and the veneration of forgotten local saints revived.

Duckett has described the re-founding of Thorney thus: "This 'Isle of Thorns' in the midst of the waters of the great marsh had once been, it was said, the home of three hermits, Tancred and Torhtred, and their sister, Tova, who settled to her prayer a little distance from them, in the heart of the thickets. They were following, we may think, in the line of a few adventurers in religion who had come in the seventh century from Medeshamstede [Peterborough], having gained permission from their abbot, Saxulf, to retreat into this deeper solitude. In the time of these brothers and their sister the Danes arrived to destroy. The tradition of Aethelwold relates that he bought the ruins the Danes had left from their owner, Aethelflaed [Ethelfleda], that he installed some monks – and the number is given as twelve – and built for them in 972-3 an abbey with its church, dedicating the altar at the east end to our Lady, the west end to Saint Peter, and a chapel in the north transept to Saint Benedict. This account points to an altar at either end, after Carolingian fashion."

To Ely, which Edgar and Ethelwold refounded as a monastery for men, another Abingdon monk named Brihtnoth was brought as abbot. Ely was the home of the incorrupt body of St. Etheldreda. However, not content with having the relics of St. Etheldreda and her holy sisters Sexburga and Ermenhilda, Brihtnoth also desired the relics of the fourth sister, the hermitess St. Withburga. So, after fasting and prayer, he and some of his monks travelled to the little monastery of East Dereham in Norfolk, where St. Withburga had struggled. Then he carried off the holy relics, to the displeasure of the monks and citizens of Dereham.

St. Ethelwold probably also helped in the reform of monasteries at Milton (Dorset), St. Neot's (Cambridgeshire) and Chertsey (Surrey).

But he never allowed church-building to get in the way of almsgiving. Thus during a famine he ordered the treasures of the Church to be broken down to make money for the poor, saying: "What is lifeless metal compared with bodies and souls created and redeemed by God?"

The saint was a great patron of the arts. He built, according to David Hugh Farmer, "the most powerful organ of its time in England. It was played by two monks and had 400 pipes and 36 bellows… Even more important was the appearance in St. Ethelwold's monasteries of the new influential Winchester style of illumination, which soon surpassed in excellence the products of the many scriptoria of continental monasteries. His school of vernacular writing at Winchester, of which Aelfric is the most famous example, was the most important of its time; its accurate translations, linguistically significant, were designed to meet the needs of bishops and clergy who were not themselves monks. In music Ethelwold's Winchester had the distinction of producing the first English polyphony in the Winchester Troper."

The most famous of the works of his school of illumination was *The Benedictional of St. Aethelwold*, which exists to this day. At the beginning of the book, the writer, Godeman, calls his master "Boanerges", "son of thunder". And he could indeed be very strict to the disobedient. But to the gentle and humble, says Abbot Aelfric, he was "gentler than a dove… He was a father of the monks and nuns, a comforter of widows and a restorer of the poor, a defender of churches, a corrector of those going astray, for he performed more by his work than we can relate in words."

"He was often afflicted with illness in his bowels and legs, spending sleepless nights from pain, and nevertheless going about by day as if well, though pale. Yet he did not indulge in the flesh of animals and birds except once every three months, when forced by great infirmity – and this, moreover, he did at the command of Archbishop Dunstan – and again during the sickness from which he died. It was always a pleasure to him to teach young men and boys, and to explain books to them in English, and with kindly exhortations to encourage them to better things. From this it came about that several of his pupils were made abbots and bishops in the English people.

"It happened once that his clerk, who had been appointed to carry his ampulla took less oil than was required, and even this he lost on the way. When the bishop came to their destination, and wished to have the chrism, he had none. Very troubled, the clerk then retraced the road he had come, and discovered the ampulla, which before had not been half full, lying full of oil.

"A monk serving him, Edwin by name, stole the purse of a guest, by the instigation of the devil. The bishop spoke to the whole congregation in chapter about this matter, saying that if anyone had taken it he should return it with his blessing, or throw it down in a place where it could be found. When three days had passed without the money being discovered, the bishop spoke again to all the brethren, saying: 'Our thief

would not return the stolen goods with our blessing, as we ordered; let him now return it with our curse; and let him be bound, not only in soul, but also in body, by our authority.' What more need be said? The brethren said 'Amen', and, behold, the thief sitting there was bound wretchedly with his arms stuck to him beneath his cope, and remained thus bound until the third hour, pondering what he ought to do. Yet he had the power to move all his limbs except his arms, which the bishop had rendered useless by the power conferred on him by God. However, the wretched man arose thus bound, and going after the bishop, was constrained to confess that he had the thing secretly, saying nothing about his binding. Then the bishop said to him gently, as was his habit: 'At least you have done well in confessing your crime now, although late; have then our blessing.' And immediately his arms were loosed without the bishop knowing. But he went away gladdened by this and told everything about his binding and his release to a certain brother, Wulfgar by name, who advised that this should rather be kept hidden in silence.

"When the bishop wished to restore the old church with great effort, and ordered the brethren frequently to work alongside the workmen, it happened one day that while the monks were standing with the masons on the top of the roof of the church a monk named Goda fell from the top to the bottom. And immediately he touched the ground he got up without having suffered any injury from such a fall, and mounted to the work where he had stood before and seizing a trowel completed what he had begun. To whom therefore ought this miracle to be ascribed unless to him by whose order he went out to this work.

"Also a certain monk, Theodoric by name, went to the bishop in the nocturnal interval wishing to inform him by signs about a certain necessary matter, and discovered him reading with a candle, and sharpening his aged eyes by unremittingly blinking his eyelids; and he stood a long time marvelling at how diligently he kept his eyes fixed to the page. Then the bishop rose from his reading and that brother took the candle and began to read, trying to sharpen his sound eyes to the reading as diligently as the bishop had done his failing eyes. But that temerity did not go unpunished, for the following night, when he had given himself to sleep, there appeared to him someone of unknown countenance, saying to him with terrible threatening: 'How dared you reproach the bishop in his reading last night?' And, saying this, he struck him a blow in the eyes with his finger, and there immediately followed a violent pain in the eyes which afflicted him greatly for many days, until he obliterated by amends the fault which he had needlessly committed against the holy man.

"Again, it happened that when the bishop was reading he fell asleep from too many vigils, and the burning candle fell on the page and continued to burn on the leaf until a brother arrived and took the flaming candle from the book, and saw the glowing pieces of the candle lying on many lines inside, and when he blew them out he found the page undamaged…"

The dedication, in 980, of the reconstructed Old Minster, was the occasion for a reconciliation between Saints Dunstan and Ethelwold and the other monastic reformers, on the one side, and the leaders of the anti-monastic reaction of the reign of King Edward, on the other. Thus Wulfstan writes that "it was dedicated solemnly and with great glory by nine bishops, of whom the first and most important, Dustan the Archbishop, and Ethelwold himself, the holy bishop, took precedence. From the 20th day of October in the presence of King Ethelred and in the assembly of almost all the earls, abbots, aldermen and foremost nobles of the entire English nation, they celebrated for two days that same dedication with universal joy. Thereafter, his heavenly piety brought so much esteem to the holy bishop that those men, distinguished by secular power, princes, dukes, mighty lords, and judges, and all who until now were opposed to him and seemed to stand in the way of God, were suddenly changed as if from wolves into sheep and venerated him with wonderful affection. Bending their necks to their knees and kissing his right hand, they commended themselves in all things to the prayers of the man of God."

Repose and Miracles

Now the time came for St. Ethelwold to depart from this earthly life. Having arrived in a village called Beddington, some sixty miles from Winchester, he fell severely ill, and received the sacraments of Holy Unction and the Body and Blood of the Lord, Then, having said farewell to his spiritual children and blessed them, he reposed on August 1, 984.

And "those who were there," writes Wulfstan, "have testified to me that the dead body of the holy man was altered by a sudden change: it was covered with a milky-white radiance and was made beautiful with a rose-coloured glow. Thus, in a certain way, the countenance of a boy seven years old seemed to manifest itself, and then on this countenance a kind of glory of the resurrection appeared through the manifestation of his changed body."

An enormous multitude from all classes of society came from the neighbouring villages and towns to say farewell to their beloved pastor. And when, on the following day, the funeral bier, surrounded by the Gospels, crosses and lighted candles, and accompanied by the chanting of psalms and hymns, entered Winchester, the whole city came out to meet the procession. The body of the saint was brought to his own Episcopal chair in the cathedral church of SS. Peter and Paul, where a vigil service and Divine Liturgy were celebrated; after which, writes Wulfstan, "he was buried in the crypt on the south side of the holy altar, where long ago it was shown to him from on high that he must rest, as he himself told me."

"Twelve years after the saint's repose," continues Wulfstan, "it pleased God that Ethelwold should be revealed by heavenly signs and his bones taken up from the enclosure of the tomb so that the light which lay hidden under a bushel might be

placed on a lampstand to shine for all those who are in the house of god. For there is a certain small city bustling with commerce that is usually called Wallingford, in which there lived a certain energetic man whose name was Elfhelm. Having lost his sight by accident, he patiently endured blindness for many years. The holy Bishop Ethelwold appeared to this man in his sleep at early dawn and urged him to go quickly to Winchester and to approach his tomb in order to receive the grace of sight, saying: 'Therefore I visit you, lying in your bed, and I foretell the things that will happen to you so that by the sign of your cure it will be clear that I should be raised up from the tomb in which I lie.' When he had heard this and had recognized the voice of the one who was speaking to him, he thanked the holy father because he deigned to visit him. And because Elfhelm was completely ignorant of where Ethelwold was buried, he diligently inquired how he would be able to recognize his tomb and approach it. The man of God immediately revealed to him the name of his former pupil and monk whom the blind man until now did not know, and said to him: 'When you arrive in haste at Winchester and enter the church of the old monastery, summon a certain monk, Wulfstan, surnamed the Precentor. When he hears from your mouth the words of my message, he will then without hesitation lead you to my tomb and there you will receive your sight.' What more is there to tell? Believing the words and promises of the holy bishop, that man went quickly to Winchester, entered the church, and summoned the aforesaid brother and asked him to grant the request of the holy father and tell him and all present the details of the vision. For it was the evening on which the birth of the most holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary is celebrated solemnly and most fittingly throughout the world. In truth, that brother was astonished and, wavering between hope and fear, he humbly submitted to the commands of the holy bishop with obedient steps and led the blind man to the chamber of the tomb. The blind man stayed there through the night in prayer, and when morning came, no longer needing a guide, he returned homewards with joy, having his sight and blessing the Lord with heart and soul.

"This revelation, which had been confirmed by so clear a miracle, was made known far and wide. Thereafter, the servant of Christ appeared clearly to the same brother Wulfstan and to many others in visions by night. Through these and other signs, he revealed himself to them because it was in accordance with the Divine will that he be transferred from his tomb and worthily placed in the church. Therefore, the venerable Bishop Alphege [the future hieromartyr archbishop of Canterbury], Ethelwold's successor, privately studying these matters with keen understanding, rendered humble thanks with a fervent heart to Christ the Almighty because in his own time, He deigned to glorify His saint through His heavenly signs. Without delay, he honourably transferred the remains of the holy Bishop Ethelwold on Septembe 11th and placed them in the choir of the church. There they have been held in great veneration until the present day and there heavenly miracles have been performed even while we behold them. From these I have briefly related two as an indication of his power.

"At that time, there was in the city of Winchester a certain little girl, the daughter of one Ethelworth, who was exceedingly ill and who was tormented almost to death. Led by her mother to the tomb of the man of God, the child went to sleep for a little while and immediately on awakening she rose sound in body, and returned home rejoicing with her mother.

"And likewise a certain little boy, son of one Elfsinus, a quiet and modest man, had been deprived of his sight in his infancy and was brought in his mother's arms to the tomb of the venerable father Ethelwold. It is wonderful to say that the affliction of his blindness thereupon disappeared, and the brightness of light coming forth opened the boy's eyes. All the people rejoiced and in complete devotion gave thanks to Christ.

"Nor must it be passed over in silence that the aforementioned successor of the saint, Bishop Alphege, had ordered a certain thief to be flogged with whips on account of his many offences and to be sent to the stocks to suffer severe punishment. And when the condemned one had for some time lain thus in torment, on a certain night the holy bishop of God, Ethelwold, came to him in a vision and said to him: 'Wretched one, why do you lie thus stretched out in the stocks for so long a time?' But he recognized the holy man whom he had often seen in his mortal life, and replied: 'My lord, I endure a fitting punishment and am tormented thus by the just sentence of the bishop, because I have often been caught stealing and have not ceased from this, but again and again I have repeated the crimes which I committed.' Then the saint said: 'Stop even now, wretched one, stop thieving and be released from the bonds of these fetters.' The wretched man, liberated, immediately arose and departing he went away and fell down before the feet of Bishop Alphege. He told him in order what had happened to him, and for the sake of the honour of so great a father, the bishop allowed him to leave unharmed. Therefore it is certain that this saint, joined to eternal life, is able, by virtue of his merits, to free us from the bonds of our sins and to lead us to the Kingdom of heaven. For while he was still in the body, the power of binding and setting free had been granted to him from heaven by the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ."

St. Ethelwold is commemorated on August 1 and September 10.

Holy Father Ethelwold, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Abbot Aelfric, *Vita Ethelwoldi,* in Dorothy Whitelock, *English Historical Documents,* London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1955; Denis Brearley and Marianne Goodfellow, "Wulfstan's Life of Saint Ethelwold: A Translation with Notes," *Revue de l'Universite d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa Quarterly,* vol. 52, no. 3, pp. 397-407; Osbert, *Vita Dunstani,* in W. Stubbs, *Memorials of St. Dunstan,* Rolls series, 1874, p. 113; Eleanor Duckett, *Saint Dunstan of Canterbury,* London: Collins, 1955; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 140-142; Andrew Prescott, *The Benedictional of St. Aethelwold*, London: The British Library, 2002, pp. 2-8)

53. SAINT ETHILWALD, HERMIT OF FARNE

Our holy Father Ethilwald (Aethelweald) was a monk and priest of Ripon monastery, who succeeded the great St. Cuthbert in the Inner Farne hermitage on an island in the North Sea in 687. The future Abbot Guthfrid of Lindisfarne related the following miracle worked by him:

"I came to the island of Farne, with two others of the brethren, to speak with the most reverend father, Ethilwald. Having been refreshed with his discourse, and taken his blessing, as we were returning home, suddenly, when we were caught in the midst of the sea, the fair weather which was wafting over us was checked, and there ensued so great and dismal a tempest, that neither the sails nor oars were of any use to us, nor had we anything to expect but death. After long struggling with the wind and waves to no effect, we looked behind us to see whether it was practicable at least to recover the island from whence we came, but we found ourselves on all sides so enveloped by the storm, that there was no hope of escaping. But looking out as far as we could see, we observed, on the island of Farne, Father Ethilwald, beloved of God, come out of his cavern to watch our course; for, hearing the noise of the storm and raging sea, he was come out to see what would become of us. When he beheld us in distress and despair, he bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in prayer for our life and safety; upon which the swelling sea was calmed, so that the storm ceased on all sides, and a fair wind attended us to the very shore. When we had landed, and had dragged upon the shore the small vessel that brought us, the storm, which had ceased a short time for our sake, immediately returned, and raged continually during the whole day; so that it plainly appeared that the brief cessation of the storm had been granted from Heaven at the request of the man of God, in order that we might escape."

St. Ethilwald died on March 23, 699, and his name was immediately inscribed in the *Calendar of Willibrord* under April 21. He was buried in Lindisfarne next to the holy bishops, and shared their wanderings in the coming years. Florence of Worcester reported many miracles due to his intercession.

(Sources: Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, V, 1; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 142; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, p. 342)

54. SAINT FELIX, BISHOP OF DUNWICH

Our holy Father Felix was born and educated in Burgundy, France. He came to St. Honorius, archbishop of Canterbury, and offered his services in the building up of the English Church. In 615 he landed at Babingley in Norfolk and built the first church in East Anglia. In 630, when King Sigebert returned from exile in France to rule the East Angles in the place of his apostate father Redwald, St. Honorius consecrated Felix to the episcopate and sent him to evangelize the people of East Anglia.

Making Dunwich the centre of his see, St. Felix established a school on the French model with teachers from Canterbury. He baptized King Anna of the East Angles and the whole of his holy family. He founded churches at Reedham, Loddon, Babingley and Shernborne, and a monastery at Soham; and the modern port of Felixstowe marks the place where, according to tradition, he made his first landing in East Anglia. He is also associated with the first church built at Ely. After a very fruitful life as a missionary bishop going round the whole province of East Anglia, St. Felix died on March 8, 647 and was buried at Soham, from where his relics were translated to Ramsey Abbey in about 1030.

St. Felix is commemorated on March 8.

Holy Father Felix, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* II, 15, III, 18-20; *Liber Eliensis*, 6; Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition*, English Orthodox Trust, 1995, chapter 80; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 147-48; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 115, 127)

55. SAINT FRIDESWIDE, ABBESS OF OXFORD

St. Frideswide was the daughter of Under-King Didanus of Oxford and his wife Safrida. With her parents' consent she was given into the charge of a Winchester nun, Algiva, who brought her up in the true faith; and when she came of age she was tonsured. However, a certain prince named Algar (according to another source, King Aethelbald of Mercia) fell in love with her and wanted to take her, by force if necessary. Frideswide decided to flee from him, and entered Oxford one stormy night with Algar in hot pursuit. But at the prayers of the holy virgin, he was stopped in a miraculous way: at the gates of the city he and his companions were suddenly blinded. On repenting, however, and sending messengers to Frideswide, he was restored to full health. For several centuries thereafter, until the reign of Henry III, English kings carefully avoided Oxford for fear of suffering the same punishment.

According to another source, it was the messengers of Algar who were blinded and then healed. But Algar himself was not deterred by this miracle, attributing it to black magic. So that night, while Frideswide was praying in solitude, an angel appeared to her and assured her that the Lord would help her to preserve her virginity and that Algar would be blinded forever. Then, following the angel's instructions, she went with two nuns to the river Thames, where a youth dressed in white with a splendidly shining face took them in a boat to Bampton (according to another source the journey was along the Isis to Abingdon). They then took refuge in a swineherd's hut in the woods. Meanwhile, Algar was trying by entreaties and bribes to force the inhabitants of Oxford to reveal Frideswide's hiding-place. When they swore that they did not know, he swore to destroy the city. But as he approached the north gate he was suddenly struck blind.

According to another version of the story, the saint fled to Binsey, two miles from Oxford and prayed for a spring to sustain her. The spring appeared, and with its waters St. Frideswide cured the king of his blindness. She built a chapel next to the well, and performed further acts of healing in it.

The holy virgin spent about three years in her refuge in the woods, in prayer and great abstinence. Once a girl was healed of blindness by applying some water in which St. Frideswide had washed her hands to her own eyes. At length, in about the year 727, she returned to Oxford and spent the rest of her days in a monastery which she had founded. She also constructed a church at Thornbury where she would go for the sake of solitude. And at Binsey a fountain miraculously sprang up at her prayers.

Once a young man who was cutting wood on Sunday found that he could not remove his fingers from the haft of his axe, and cried out in terrible pain. Frideswide was called and loosed him by her prayers. On another occasion she cast

a demon out of a fisherman. Again, she was once returning to Oxford when a horribly deformed leper approached her in the midst of a large crowd and shouted: "O virgin Frideswide, I adjure you by Almighty God that you give me a kiss in the name of Jesus Christ, His Only Begotten Son". The virgin approached him, made the sign of the Cross over him, and kissed him. Immediately his leprosy fell away and his skin became like that of young child.

St. Frideswide reposed on October 19, 735, an angel having announced to her the day of her death. At the moment of her death she saw Saints Catherine and Cecilia, for whom she had a particular veneration, approaching her. "I ask only for pardon, my Lord, only pardon," she said, and died. Suddenly a heavenly light lit up the house and a wonderful fragrance filled the whole city.

In 1004 St. Frideswide's monastery was burned to the ground by the Danes. At this time a certain priest was seen taking some ornaments out of the church of St. Frideswide, and was publicly accused of sacrilege. It was decided that he should first attend the Divine Liturgy and then give proof of his innocence. And so he stood fearlessly in front of the tomb of the holy virgin until the reading of the Holy Gospel. But at that point he leapt up and said: "I confess, O lady, I confess," and immediately fell as if lifeless. At length he recovered consciousness and said to the bystanders: "Did you not see this holy virgin beating me so cruelly with two bundles of sticks that she forced me to confess the theft? I cannot hide it any longer: I confess to sacrilege." And then he took off his clothes and showed them the marks of his beatings on the chest and stomach and both sides...

St. Frideswide is commemorated on October 19.

Holy Mother Frideswide, pray to God for us!

(Sources: William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, book IV, 178; *Nova Legenda Anglie*, pp. 457-461; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 161; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 72, 75)

56. SAINT FURSEY, ABBOT OF BURGH CASTLE

Our holy Father Fursey (which means “virtue” in Gaelic) was born in about 597 in Ireland, on an island in Lough Corrib where the ruins of a church dedicated to him still stand. He was raised partly in County Kerry, and founded a monastery near Cong, County Galway, where he spent ten years preaching. When he was already well-known for his holiness of life, he decided to go into voluntary exile for the Lord's sake to avoid the crowds that resorted to him. In preparation, he withdrew as a hermit to a remote island off the west coast of Ireland. Then, coming to East Anglia with a group of missionaries, including his brothers Saints Foillan and Ultan, he was well received by King Sigebert and Bishop Felix of Dunwich.

Then he fell ill, and was granted a vision by God in which he was told to continue his ministry of preaching and asceticism, since the end for all is certain, but the hour is uncertain. Then he proceeded to build a monastery on ground given him by King Sigebert at Burgh Castle, an ancient Roman fort on the East Anglian coast. “Inspired by the example of his goodness,” writes the Venerable Bede, “and the effectiveness of his teaching, many unbelievers were drawn to Christ, and those who already believed were drawn to greater love and faith in Him.”

Once he fell ill, and his soul left his body from evening until the next morning. "Being restored to his body at that time," writes Bede, "he not only saw the greater joys of the blessed, but also extraordinary combats of evil spirits, who by frequent accusations wickedly endeavoured to obstruct his journey to heaven; but the angels protecting him, all their endeavours were in vain." Fursey saw many other terrible things in this vision, and when he was restored to his body bore the mark of the fire of hell on his shoulder and jaw.

Soon after this, Fursey entrusted all the business of the monastery to his brother Foillan and the priests Gobban and Dicull (who later founded the church at Bosham in Sussex), and went to live for a year as a hermit with another brother of his, Ultan.

St. Sigebert was killed in battle by the pagan King Penda in 635. However, this was not the end of St. Fursey’s mission: Burgh Castle was endowed with “finer buildings and gifts” by King Anna, Sigebert’s successor, before he also was killed by Penda in 654.

In about 644 Fursey decided to go on a pilgrimage to Rome. But he was detained in France, where he founded a monastery at Lagny-sur-Marne, near Paris. He was helped in this by the Merovingian king and by Erkenwald, mayor of Neustria, who gave him land for the monastery.

St. Fursey’s two brothers worked with him at Burgh Castle, and later followed

him to France. They are both venerated as saints in their own right: St. Foillan (died 655, feast: 31 October) and St. Ultan (died 686, feast: 1 May)."

St. Fursey died at Mézerolles on the Somme in about the year 650 (649, according to the *Annals of Ulster*) while on a journey back to England. His body was placed temporarily in the porch of a church that Erkenwald was building at Péronne until the church could be dedicated. Twenty-seven days later, when the church was dedicated, the body was found to be completely incorrupt, and so it was reburied near the altar. Four years later, it was again found to be incorrupt, and was translated into a special chapel to the east of the altar in a house-shaped shrine made by St. Eloi, Bishop of Noyon, an adviser to Queen Bathild. This became a popular object of veneration for Irish pilgrims, and was called Peronna Scottorum. Many miracles were wrought through the saint's intercession both before and after his death, including the raising from the dead of the son of the Frankish duke, Haimon.

The relics of St. Fursey survived until the French revolution, and his head was in a reliquary until the Franco-Prussian war of 1870.

A Celtic prayer of the type known as a lorica, or breast-plate is attributed to St. Fursey:

The arms of God be around my shoulders,
The touch of the Holy Spirit upon my head,
The sign of Christ's cross upon my forehead,
The sound of the Holy Spirit in my ears,
The fragrance of the Holy Spirit in my nostrils,
The vision of heaven's company in my eyes,
The conversation of heaven's company on my lips,
The work of God's Church in my hands,
The service of God and neighbour in my feet,
A home for God in my heart,
And to God, the Father of all, my entire being. Amen.

St. Fursey's feastday is January 16.

Holy Father Fursey, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, book III, 18, 19; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 1978; Peter Berresford Ellis, *Celt and Saxon*, London: Constable, 1993, pp. 150-151; Michelle P. Brown, *The Life of St. Fursey*, Fursey Occasional Paper Number 1, 2000; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 129-130)

57. SAINT GRIMBALD, ABBOT OF WINCHESTER

Our holy Father Grimbald was born at Thérouanne in the Pas-de-Calais, and joined the monastery of St. Bertin in about 840, being ordained to the priesthood in about 870. In 886 he went to Rheims. He was a notable scholar.

In 887 King Alfred wrote to Archbishop Fulk of Rheims, asking him to allow Grimbald to come to England, and sending him as a present some dogs. The archbishop agreed reluctantly, saying that he was sending Grimbald as a spiritual dog to fight spiritual enemies in exchange for the corporeal dogs the king was sending him. To the great grief of the monks of St. Bertin, Grimbald travelled to England, where he was received with honour by all the highest men in the Church and State. And in 889, on the death of Archbishop Ethelred of Canterbury, he was offered the primatial see. But he refused, and remained to the end of his days a priest-monk.

Soon after his arrival in England, the saint settled in a little monastery he had built in Winchester. There he played a central role in the capital's life, directing the monastery and counselling many of the citizens, including the king, whom he helped in his translations from Latin into English, especially of St. Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, and in many other matters. It was on Grimbald's advice that the Mercian Plegmund was elected to succeed Ethelred as archbishop of Canterbury.

On October 26, 899, King Alfred reposed in peace, and was buried in Winchester. St. Grimbald especially grieved for the king, and immediately set about building a new monastery, which was called the New Minster. Alfred's son and successor, King Edward the Elder, the nobles and the people contributed enthusiastically to this work, and it was completed with amazing speed in two years. Then, on July 8, 901, the saint reposed in peace.

Many miracles were wrought through the saint's intercession both during and after his earthly life. A widow who was paralysed was brought to the New Minster and healed by him. Two women came to him from the village of Meon, one blind and the other mute. The blind spoke for the mute, and the mute saw for the blind, and both received healing at the tomb of St. Grimbald. A little girl from Chiltcombe whose breast was bent down to her knees crawled to his tomb and received healing. A boy from Winchester who had lost his sight was told in a dream to ask the honourable citizen Leofwin to lead him to St. Grimbald's tomb. There he received his sight again. On the eve of his feast a blind woman was coming to the gates of Winchester when she felt scales falling from her eyes. When she arrived at the monastery she was completely cured. Another woman, a paralytic, on hearing this story, also had recourse to the holy doctor, and was restored to full health.

The saint's relics were translated in 938, in about 1050 and again in 1110, when the whole establishment was moved to Hyde Abbey.

St. Grimbald's feastday is July 8.

Holy Father Grimbald, pray to God for us!

(Sources: J.B.L. Tolhurst, *The Monastic Breviary of Hyde Abbey*, Henry Bradshaw Society, 1939, July 8; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 182-183; Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Alfred the Great,* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983, p. 191)

58. SAINT HAROLD, MARTYR-KING OF ENGLAND

St. Harold was the last Orthodox king of England. He was born early in the eleventh century, the son of Earl Godwin of Wessex and his wife Gytha Thorkelsdottir, whose supposed brother, Ulf Jarl, was the father of King Sweyn II of Denmark. Godwin and Gytha had several children; Harold was the second.

When Edward the Confessor became King of England in 1043, he married Harold's sister Edith. As a result of this Harold became Earl of East Anglia in 1045. In 1051 Earl Godwin was forced into exile, and Harold accompanied his father. However, when Godwin died in 1053, he succeeded him as Earl of Wessex. King Edward trusted Earl Harold in a way he had never trusted his father, so Harold soon became perhaps the most powerful man in England after the king.

In 1058 he became Earl of Hereford, which meant that he had to defend the English border against the Welsh. In a series of campaigns (1062–63) Harold defeated Gruffydd ap Llywelyn, the ruler of Gwynedd and Wales. In 1063 Gruffydd was killed by his own troops.

In 1064 Earl Harold made a great blunder. The story is related with variants and inconsistencies in the Norman sources and on the Bayeux tapestry, but is not related at all in the pre-Conquest English sources. Nevertheless, this much is clear: that Harold sailed from Bosham in Sussex on a mission to the continent, that he was storm-driven onto the coast of Ponthieu, where he was captured by Count Guy, that William of Normandy ransomed him from Guy and treated him kindly at first, but that later he was persuaded, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, to make an oath over a box of artfully concealed holy relics in Rouen that he would support William's claim to the English throne.

Why did Harold make the fateful journey? One Anglo-Norman source suggests that he was simply on a fishing trip and landed up on the wrong side of the Channel. However, the eleventh-century Canterbury Monk Edmer of Canterbury, using sources close to the family, has a much more plausible story, namely, that Harold "asked leave of the king to go to Normandy to set free his brother and nephew who were being held there as hostages" (Harold's father Earl Godwin had given these hostages to the king after his abortive coup in 1051). In support of this theory is the fact that Harold did return with one of the hostages, his nephew Hakon. William continued to hold Harold's brother, Wulfnoth…

Edmer continues: "The king said to [Harold]: 'I will have no part in this; but, not to give the impression of wishing to hinder you, I give you leave to go where you will and to see what you can do. But I have a presentiment that you will succeed in bringing misfortune upon the whole kingdom and discredit upon yourself. For I know that the Duke is not so simple as to be at all inclined to give

them [the hostages] up to you unless he foresees that in doing so he will secure some great advantage to himself.'"

The king's prophetic spirit did not fail him; and according to a twelfth-century tradition, a great blow was miraculously struck at the oak in Rouen where Harold made his oath to support William's claim to the throne – an oath, which, since he broke it when he himself became king, led to his and his country's downfall. "For the oak, which was once a tree of great height and beauty, … is stated, wonderful to relate, to have shed its bark, and to have lost its greenness and its foliage. A sight well worth seeing, for a tree which a little time before was remarkable for the number and thickness of its leaves, shrivelled up from the roots, as quickly as did the gourd of Jonah and the olive of that other prophet and all its branches became white."

Just as the Lord's withering of the fig tree signified the falling away of the Jewish synagogue, so the withering of the oak at Rouen signified the falling away of the English Church…

In 1065 a serious rebellion against King Edward's rule broke out in Northumbria. The Earl of Northumbria at this time was Harold's brother, Tostig, who angered his subjects by his cruelty. According to King Edward's anonymous biographer, several members of the witan "charged that glorious earl with being too cruel; and he was accused of punishing disturbers more for desire of their property which would be confiscated than for love of justice." But the same author excused Tostig on the grounds that "such… was the cruelty of that people and their neglect of God that even parties of twenty or thirty men could scarcely travel without being either killed or robbed by the multitude of robbers in wait."

However, that there was probably some justice in the accusations appears from the fact that St. Cuthbert once intervened on behalf of a man condemned by Tostig, as Barlow describes in this summary of Simeon of Durham's account: "[Tostig] had succeeded in arresting a man named Aldan-hamal, a malefactor notorious for theft, robbery, murder and arson. The criminal was condemned to death, despite attempts by kinsmen and friends to bribe the earl; and while in fetters at Durham awaiting execution, when all efforts at rescue had failed, his conscience was smitten, he repented of his crimes, and he promised St. Cuthbert that if he could go free he would make full atonement. St. Cuthbert heard his prayer, struck off his fetters, and allowed him to make a lucky escape into the church. The guards, under Tostig's thane Barcwith, went in pursuit and considered breaking open the doors of the cathedral, for freedom of sanctuary, they thought, would allows all thieves, robbers, and murderers to laugh in their faces. But Barcwith was immediately struck down by heaven for his impiety and within an hour or two died raving mad; and Earl Tostig, terrified by his fate, pardoned the criminal and, later, held him in esteem."

The immediate cause of the rebellion appears to have been an extra tax imposed by Tostig on his earldom. The rebels seized York while Tostig was hunting with the king in Wiltshire, and proceeded to slaughter his officials and seize his treasury. They then summoned Morcar, younger brother of Earl Edwin of Mercia, and with him as their "earl" marched south to plead their case with King Edward, ravaging Tostig's lands on the way. Earl Edwin joined them at Northampton, and there Earl Harold also came as the emissary of King Edward.

Harold was in a most difficult position. His natural desire was to support his brother against the rebels. But that would have led to civil war, which Harold now drew back from, just as his father and King Edward had done during the earlier crisis of 1051-52. In his meeting with the king at Oxford he counselled agreeing to the terms of the rebels. With great sorrow and reluctance, the king complied: Tostig was deposed, the rebels were pardoned and Morcar was confirmed as Earl of Northumbria. In the following month Earl Tostig and his wife fled to her brother, Count Baldwin of Flanders. Tostig was bitter that the king had not supported him against the rebels. But he especially blamed his brother Harold, claiming that the Northumbrians "had undertaken this madness against their earl at the artful persuasion of his brother, Earl Harold." Harold denied this on oath; and since he gained nothing from the affair except the undying enmity of his brother, who fought against him in 1066, he must be believed.

King Edward died on January 5, 1066. Since he had no children, the witan had to look around for the best successor. Their choice fell on Earl Harold, who, as well as being the brother-in-law of King Edward, had been bequeathed the kingdom by him on his deathbed. A Waltham chronicler, writing after King Harold's death, wrote that he was elected unanimously; "for there was no one in the land more knowledgeable, more vigorous in arms, wiser in the laws of the land or more highly regarded for his prowess of every kind". King Edward's anonymous biographer adds that he was handsome, graceful and strong in body; and calls him wise, patient, merciful, courageous, temperate and prudent in character. That he was both strong and courageous is witnessed not only by his highly successful military career but also by his pulling two men out of the quicksand during his stay with William in 1064. The fact that he was admired and trusted by most Englishmen is shown by his ascending the throne without any opposition, although he was not the strongest candidate by hereditary right. Only after his death did anyone put forward the candidacy of Prince Edgar, grandson of King Edmund Ironside – and that only half-heartedly. Thus on the English side there was general agreement that he was the best man to lead the country.

However, Duke William of Normandy claimed the kingdom as his by right, and denounced Harold as a usurper. His most powerful argument was that Harold had broken the oath of fealty that he had taken to William in 1064. Now all the

evidence suggests that this oath was taken under duress. Moreover, the first law in the Code of King Alfred the Great stated: "If a man is wrongfully constrained to promise either to betray his lord or to aid an unlawful undertaking, then it is better to be false to the promise than to fulfil it." Nevertheless Harold's position was undoubtedly weakened by his breaking of his oath.

William now took his case to the papacy in Rome, and with the help of Archdeacon Hildebrand, the future Pope Gregory VII, he succeeded in obtaining the Pope's blessing to his invading England – which, besides having an "unlawful" king, had in Stigand, archbishop of Canterbury, a "schismatic" primate who was not recognized by Rome.

So early in 1066 Duke William began to gather a vast army from all round Western Europe in preparation for what became, in effect, the first crusade of the heretical Papacy against the Orthodox Church.

King Harold was both hated and admired by the Normans. Thus William of Poitiers admitted that he was warlike and courageous. And Ordericus Vitalis, writing some 70 years after the conquest, says that Harold "was much admired for his great stature and elegance, for his bodily strength, for his quick-wittedness and verbal facility, his sense of humour and his honest bearing." Whatever his personal sins before he became king, he appears to have tried hard to atone for them once he ascended the throne. Perhaps under the influence of the holy Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester, he put away his mistress, the beautiful Edith "Swan-neck", and entered into lawful marriage with the sister of Earls Edwin and Morcar, Alditha Then, as Florence of Worcester writes, he "immediately began to abolish unjust laws and to make good ones; to patronize churches and monasteries; to pay particular reverence to bishops, abbots, monks and clerics; and to show himself pious, humble and affable to all good men. But he treated malefactors with great severity, and gave general orders to his earls, ealdormen, sheriffs and thegns to imprison all thieves, robbers and disturbances of the kingdom. He laboured in his own person by sea and by land for the protection of his realm."

Although there had been no open opposition to his consecration as king, one source indicates that "the Northumbrians, a great and turbulent folk, were not ready to submit", just as they had not been ready to submit to King Edward. Harold needed to be sure that he had the support of the turbulent North. So early in the year he enlisted the aid of Bishop Wulfstan on a peacemaking mission to Northumbria.

"For the fame of [Wulfstan's] holiness," writes William of Malmesbury, "had so found a way to the remotest tribes, that it was believed that he could quell the most stubborn insolence. And so it came to pass. For those tribes, untameable by the sword, and haughty from generation to generation, yet for the reverence they

bore to the Bishop, easily yielded allegiance to Harold. And they would have continued in that way, had not Tostig, as I have said, turned them aside from it. Wulfstan, good, gentle, and kindly though he was, spake not smooth things to the sinners, but rebuked their vices, and threatened them with evil to come. If they were still rebellious, he warned them plainly, they should pay the penalty in suffering. Never did his human wisdom or his gift of prophecy deceive him. Many things to come, both on that journey and at other times, did he foretell. Moreover he spake plainly to Harold of the calamities which should befall him and all England if he should not bethink himself to correct their wicked ways. For in those days the English were for the most part evil livers; and in peace and the abundance of pleasant things luxury flourished."

In the spring and summer, as Halley's comet blazed across the sky, the two armies massed on opposite sides of the Channel. While William built a vast fleet to take his men across the Channel, King Harold kept his men under arms and at a high degree of alert all along the southern English coast. By September, William was ready; but adverse winds kept him in French ports. King Harold, however, was forced to let his men go home to bring in the harvest. The English coast was now dangerously exposed, and on September 27, taking advantage of a change in the wind, William embarked his men.

As if that were not enough, Harold now suffered another reverse: King Harald Hardrada of Norway, who had acquired a great reputation as a warrior in the Byzantine emperor's army, invaded Northumbria with the aid of the English King Harold's exiled brother Tostig, According to the medieval Icelandic historian Snorri Sturluson, as the Norwegian Harald was preparing to invade England, he dreamed that he was in Trondheim and met there his half-brother, St. Olaf. And Olaf told him that he had won many victories and died in holiness because he had stayed in Norway. But now he feared that he, Harald, would meet his death, "and wolves will rend your body; God is not to blame." Snorri wrote that "many other dreams and portents were reported at the time, and most of them were ominous."

After defeating Earls Edwin and Morcar at Gate Fulford on September 20, the Norwegian king triumphantly entered York, whose citizens (mainly of Scandinavian extraction) not only surrendered to him but agreed to march south with him against the rest of England.

However, on September 25, after an amazingly rapid forced march from London, the English King Harold, arrived in York, and then almost immediately hurried on the further seven miles on to Stamford Bridge, where the Norwegians and rebel English and Flemish mercenaries were encamped. After a long battle in which both sides suffered huge losses, the Norwegian army was destroyed and both Harald Hardrada and Tostig were killed. The 'C' manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* ends on this high point; but Divine Providence decreed that "the

end was not yet".

On October 1, while he was celebrating his victory in York, King Harold heard that William had landed at Pevensey on the south coast. Although, from a military point of view, he would probably have done better to rest and gather together a large force from all round the country while drawing William further away from his base, thereby stretching his lines of communication, Harold decided to employ the same tactics of forced marches and a lightning strike that had worked so well against the Norwegians. So he marched his men back down to London.

On the way Harold stopped at Waltham, a monastery he had founded and generously endowed to house the greatest holy object of the English Church - the Black Cross of Waltham. Several years before, this Cross had been discovered in the earth in response to a Divine revelation to a humble priest of Montacute in Somerset. It was placed on a cart drawn by oxen, but the oxen refused to move until the name "Waltham" was pronounced. Then the oxen moved, without any direction from men, straight towards Waltham, which was many miles away on the other side of the country. On the way, 66 miracles of healing were accomplished on sick people who venerated it, until it came to rest at the spot where King Harold built his monastery.

Only a few days before, on his way to York, King Harold had stopped at the monastery and was praying in front of the Black Cross when he received a cheering message from Abbot Ethelwine of Ramsey. King Edward the Confessor had appeared to him that night, he said, and told him of his (Harold's) affliction of both body and spirit - his anxiety for the safety of his kingdom, and the violent pain which had suddenly seized his leg. Then he said that through his intercession God had granted Harold the victory and healing from his pain. Cheered by this message, Harold received the healing of his pain - and the victory.

But it was a different story on the way back south to fight the Normans. Harold "went into the church of the Holy Cross and placed the relics which he had in his capella on the altar, and made a vow that if the Lord granted him success in the war he would confer on the church a mass of treasures and a great number of clerics to serve God there and that he himself would serve God as His bought slave. The clergy, therefore, who accompanied him, together with a procession which went before, came to the doors of the church where he was lying prostrate, his arms outstretched in the form of a cross in front of the Holy Cross, praying to the Crucified One.

"An extraordinary miracle then took place. For the image of the Crucifixion, which before had been erect looking upward, when it saw the king humble himself to the ground, lowered its face as if sad. The wood indeed knew the future! The sacristan Turkill claimed that he himself had seen this and intimated it to many

while he was collecting and storing away the gifts which the king had placed on the altar. I received this from his mouth, and from the assertion of many bystanders who saw the head of the image erect. But no one except Turkill saw its bending down. When they saw this bad omen, overcome with great sorrow, they sent the senior and most distinguished brothers of the church, Osegood Cnoppe and Ailric Childemaister, in the company to the battle, so that when the outcome was known they might take care of the bodies of the king and those of his men who were devoted to the Church, and, if the future would have it so, bring back their corpses..."

On October 5, Harold was back in London with his exhausted army. Common sense dictated that he stay there until the levies he had summoned arrived; but instead, to the puzzlement of commentators from the eleventh to the twentieth centuries, he pushed on by a forced march of fifty to sixty miles south, after only a few days' rest and without the much needed reinforcements. What was the reason for this crucial tactical blunder?

David Howarth has argued convincingly that the reason was that Harold now, for the first time, heard (from an envoy of William's) that he and his followers had been excommunicated by the Pope and that William was fighting with the pope's blessing and under a papal banner, with a tooth of St. Peter encrusted in gold around his neck. "This meant that he was not merely defying William, he was defying the Pope. It was doubtful whether the Church, the army and the people would support him in that defiance: at best, they would be bewildered and half-hearted. Therefore, since a battle had to be fought, it must be fought at once, without a day's delay, before the news leaked out. After that, if the battle was won, would be time to debate the Pope's decision, explain that the trial had been a travesty, query it, appeal against it, or simply continue to defy it...

"... This had become a private matter of conscience. There was one higher appeal, to the judgement of God Himself, and Harold could only surrender himself to that judgement: 'May the Lord now decide between Harold and me' [William had said]. He had been challenged to meet for the final decision and he could not evade it; in order that God might declare His judgement, he was obliged to accept the challenge in person.

"He left London in the evening of 12 October. A few friends with him who knew what had happened and still believed in him: Gyrth and his brother Leofwine, his nephew Hakon whom he had rescued from Normandy, two canons from Waltham already nervous at the miracle they had seen, two aged and respected abbots who carried chain mail above their habits, and - perhaps at a distance - Edith Svanneshals, the mother of his sons. He led the army, who did not know, the remains of his house-carls and whatever men of the fyrd had already gathered in London. The northern earls had been expected with contingents, but they had not

come and he could not wait. He rode across London Bridge again and this time down the Dover road to Rochester, and then by the minor Roman road that plunged south through the Andredeswald - the forest now yellow with autumn and the road already covered with fallen leaves. The men of Kent and Sussex were summoned to meet at an ancient apple tree that stood at the junction of the tracks outside the enclave of Hastings. Harold reached that meeting place late on Friday 13, ready to face his judgement; and even while the army was forming for battle, if one may further believe the *Roman de Rou*, the terrible rumour was starting to spread that the King was excommunicated and the same fate hung over any man who fought for him."

The only military advantage Harold might have gained from his tactics - that of surprise - was lost: William had been informed of his movements. And so, as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says, it was William who, early on the morning of October 14, "came upon him unexpectedly before his army was set in order. Nevertheless the king fought against him most resolutely with those men who wished to stand by him, and there was great slaughter on both sides. King Harold was slain, and Leofwine, his brother, and Earl Gurth, his brother, and many good men. The French had possession of the place of slaughter, as God granted them because of the nation's sins..."

As William of Malmesbury said, the English "were few in numbers, but brave in the extreme". Even the Normans admitted that the battle had been desperately close. If King Harold had not been hit in the eye by a stray arrow, the result may well have been different. But Divine Providence judged otherwise, as the chronicler said, “because of the nation’s sins”.

Why did the chronicler say: "with those men who wished to stand by him"? *Because many did not wish to stay with him when they learned of the Pope's anathema*. And yet many others stayed, including several churchmen.

Why did they stay, knowing that they stood to lose, not only their bodies, but also, if the anathema was true - their eternal souls? Very few probably knew about the schism of 1054 between Rome and Constantinople or about the theological arguments - over the Filioque, over unleavened bread at the Liturgy, over the supposed universal jurisdiction of the Pope - that led to the schism of 1054. Still fewer, if any, could have come to the firm conclusion that Rome was wrong and Constantinople was right. That Harold had (involuntarily) perjured himself in coming to the throne was generally accepted - and yet they stayed with him.

In following King Harold, the Englishmen who fought and died at Hastings were following their hearts rather than their heads. Their hearts told them that, whatever the sins of the king and the nation, he was still their king and this was still their nation. Surely God would not want them to desert these at the time of

their greatest need, in a life-and-death struggle against a merciless foreign invader? Perhaps they remembered the words of Archbishop Wulfstan of York: "By what means shall peace and comfort come to God's servants and God's poor, but through Christ and through a Christian king?" Almost certainly they were drawn by a grace-filled feeling of loyalty to the Lord's Anointed; for the English were exceptional in their continuing veneration for the monarchy, which in other parts had been destroyed by the papacy.

William's actions just after the battle were unprecedentedly cruel and impious, even by the not very civilized standards of the time. Thus he refused to give the body of King Harold, which had been hideously mutilated by the Normans, to his mother for burial, although she offered him the weight of the body in gold. Eventually, the monks of Waltham, with the help of Harold's former mistress, Edith "Swan-neck", found the body and buried it, as was thought, in Waltham.

However, there is now compelling evidence that a mutilated body discovered in a splendid coffin in Godwin's family church at Bosham on April 7, 1954 is in fact the body of the last Orthodox king of England.

In fact, two royal coffins were found on that date. One was found to contain the bones of the daughter of a previous king of England, Canute, who had drowned at a young age. The other, "magnificently furnished" coffin contained the bones of a middle-aged man, but with no head and with several of the bones fractured. It was supposed that these were the bones of Earl Godwin, the father of King Harold.

For several years no further attention was paid to this discovery. However, just recently a local historian, John Pollock, has re-examined all the evidence relating to the bones in the second coffin and has come to the conclusion that they belong to none other than King Harold himself.

He points out, first, that they could not belong to Earl Godwin, because, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Godwin was buried in Winchester, not Bosham.

Secondly, the bones are in a severely mutilated state, which does not accord with what we know about Godwin's death. However, this *does* accord with what we know about King Harold's death, for he was savagely hacked to pieces by four knights on the field of battle. As the earliest account of the battle that we have, by Guy, Bishop of Amiens, says: "With the point of his lance the first (William) pierced Harold's shield and then penetrated his chest, drenching the ground with his blood, which poured out in torrents. With his sword the second (Eustace) cut off his head, just below where his helmet protected him. The third (Hugh) disembowelled him with his javelin. The fourth (Walter Giffard) hacked off his leg at the thigh and hurled it far away. Struck down in this way, the dead body lay on

the ground." Moreover, the Bayeux Tapestry clearly shows the sword of one of the knights cutting into the king's left thigh - and one of the bones in the coffin is precisely a fractured left thigh bone.

Thirdly, although some sources say that Harold was buried in the monastery he founded at Waltham, his body has never been found there or anywhere else in spite of extensive searches. However, the most authoritative of the sources, William of Poitiers, addresses the dead Harold thus: "Now you lie there *in your grave by the sea*: by generations yet unborn of English and Normans you will ever be accursed..." The church at Bosham is both by the sea and not far from the field of battle...

Therefore it is possible that the grieving monks who are said to have buried King Harold's body at Waltham, in fact buried it in his own, family church by the sea at Bosham. Or, more likely, William himself buried it at Bosham, since the church passed into his possession, and he is said to have ordered its burial "on the sea-shore". But this was done in secret, because the Normans did not want any public veneration of the king they hated so much, and the Church could not tolerate pilgrimages to the grave of this, the last powerful enemy of the "reformed Papacy" in the West. And so the rumour spread that Harold had survived the battle and had become a secret hermit in the north - a rumour that we can only now reject with certainty.

Harold's daughter Gytha fled to Kiev, where she married Great-Prince Vladimir Monomakh. The blood of the last Orthodox king of England was therefore joined to that of the Russian royal family. Although King Harold has never been formally canonized, and the Normans made his cult unlawful, we can venerate him among the saints because he gave his life on the field of battle for the defence of his Orthodox homeland against the heretical Latins.

Holy Martyr-King Harold, pray to God for us!

59. SAINTS HEDDA, FRITHESTAN, BIRNSTAN AND ALPHEGE, BISHOPS OF WINCHESTER

Our holy Father Hedda was educated at Whitby and became a monk and an abbot. In 676 he was consecrated bishop of Winchester by St. Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury. The Venerable Bede wrote that "he was a good and just man, and exercised his episcopal duties rather by his innate love of virtue, than by what he had gained from learning." He had a great influence over Kings Caedwalla and Ina of Wessex, both of whom became monks in Rome. King Ina acknowledged his help in framing his code of laws, which later were incorporated into the code of King Alfred the Great.

St. Hedda died in 705, and many miracles took place at his grave, as Bishop Plechthelm of Whithorn witnessed. (According to William of Malmesbury, the miracles had ceased by his time in the twelfth century). So much dust was taken from the place where he died for the healing of men and animals that a large hole was created there. The relics of the saint are still to be found in the see of Winchester, which he founded.

St. Hedda is commemorated on July 7.

*

Our holy Father Frithestan was one of seven bishops consecrated in one day by Archbishop Plegmund of Canterbury in the year 909. He ruled his see until 931. The saint donated a stole embroidered with Byzantine iconography to St. Cuthbert's. It was found in St. Cuthbert's coffin and can still be seen at Durham. After his death, it is said, his tomb could not hide his holiness.

St. Frithestan's feastday is September 10.

*

Our holy Father Birnstan (Birstand, Beornstan) succeeded St. Frithestan as Bishop of Winchester in 931. His usual routine was to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, then attend to the poor, washing them and giving them food, and then pray in solitude for several hours. At night he would go round the cemetery praying for the souls of the reposed. Once, after praying: "May they rest in peace," he heard a voice as if of an infinite army of spirits replying: "Amen". He reposed while praying in solitude in 934, and was more or less forgotten for about forty years.

One night, St. Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, was working in front of the holy relics of his diocese when three people appeared to him. The middle of

these then said: "I am Birnstan, formerly bishop of this city. Here," he said, indicating the man on his right, "is Birinus, the first preacher. And here," he said, indicating the man on his left, "is Swithun, the special patron of this church and community. You should know that just as you see me here with them now, so I enjoy no unequal glory with them in Heaven. Why then am I deprived of the honour of men, when I am magnified in the assembly of the celestial spirits?"

St. Birnstan is commemorated on November 4.

*

Our holy Father Alphege succeeded St. Birnstan as Bishop of Winchester in 934. Nothing is known about his early life. Once, on the first day of Great Lent, he was exhorting his flock to live in abstinence and chastity. But one man mocked his words, and said that he would sleep with his wife that night. "You know not, wretched one, what the morning will bring," said the holy man. The next morning, the man was found dead in his bed.

St. Ethelwold used to tell another story about St. Alphege's zeal for observance of the fasts. There was a man who used to drink when he liked during Great Lent. One day he asked the bishop to bless his cup. He refused, and the fool drank without the blessing and went out. By Divine Providence a bull was being baited outside; it rushed towards him and gored him to death…

This saint was the spiritual father of two other saints, Dunstan and Ethelwold, and it was he who ordained them both to the holy priesthood, together with another man named Athelstan. After the Divine Liturgy, he turned to the people and said: "I have ordained three priests today, two of whom will attain to the Episcopal dignity, one in my see, the other in another diocese." Then Athelstan said: "Am I one of the two who will reach the Episcopal dignity?" "No," said the bishop, "nor will you continue in the holy life in which you began." And so it turned out…

St. Alphege reposed in peace in 951. He is commemorated on March 12.

Holy Father Alphege, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, III, 7, IV, 12, V, 18; Saxon Priest B., *Vita Dunstani;* William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, II, 75; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 14, 43-44, 162, 187; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, p. 26)

60. SAINT HELIER, MONK-MARTYR OF JERSEY

The holy Martyr Helier (Helibert, Hélyi) lived in the sixth century. He was born to a noble Frankish couple called Sigebert and Leufgard, from the city of Tongres in France. The couple, though pagan, had appealed to the holy monk Cunibert that they should have a child, and through his prayers they received their request. But Cunibert had agreed to pray on condition that if a child was born he should be offered to God – a condition which the parents failed to fulfil, because his father wanted him to be a warrior.

Cunibert went away saddened, and for seven years Helier was brought up as a pagan child.

One day, however, Helier fell ill; his strength forsook him, and he became pale and weak. Lying in pain on his mother's lap, he said: "Oh, give me back to the holy man by whose prayers I was born, and to whom you promised me." His parents sent him to Cunibert, who knelt beside the sick child and healed him by his prayers.

Then Helier shared with Cunibert his harsh monastic life – but remained a catechumen, without being baptized. In spite of that, the boy acquired a reputation for sanctity and the local people brought their sick to him to be healed. Thus he cured blindness, and removed a snake from the mouth of a man who had had the misfortune of having it slither in there while he was asleep. On hearing this, some Franks went to Sigebert and said: "Let us kill this wizard Cunibert, and get your child back." Sigebert agreed.

The plan was revealed to Cunibert, and after Mattins the next day he told Helier that he would be killed, and counselled the boy to run away. The boy wept, and asked: "And will you not baptize me, O my father?" Cunibert replied: "God wills that another hand should do that, O my son." Having spent the whole day in church, they went to their cells. Then, as Cunibert was reciting the 101st psalm, the wicked men entered his cell and killed him. Helier, hearing a noise, rushed into the cell of his master and found him dead in a pool of blood, but with his finger pointing at the verse he had been reciting. Helier wept over the body of his master, then hastily buried it and ran away.

For six days he wandered through pathless forests until he came to the city of Thérouanne. Almost dead from fatigue, he asked a poor widow for help. She took him into her house and took care of him for two weeks. Then he asked her to show him a lonely spot where he could serve God in quiet. She led him to St. Mary's church, outside the town. For five years he lived in the porch of the church, exposed to the elements. His shoes soon wore out, and his feet were stained with blood. However, when he wanted, he could go back to the widow's house, where he could sleep on a wooden pallet. Soon, as at Tongres, the sick came to him for healing.

Once the wife of a nobleman of the town called Rotald accidentally caused the death of her own child. Rotald rushed to the Bishop of Thérouanne and asked him to go to Helier and order him to pray for the resurrection of the child. Helier obeyed, went to the church where the body of the child was lying on a bier, and prayed for his resurrection. The child began to move, and to cry for his mother…

That night Christ appeared to Helier and told him to go to Nanteuil, where a man called Marculf would baptize him and teach him what would be his way of life. He set out immediately the next day. On the way, near the little river Canche, the devil appeared to him in bodily form and tempted him to return to the wealthy environment in which he was born. But Helier rejected him, and the devil vanished.

Arriving at Vallesdune in Normandy, he found Marculf, who baptized him on Christmas Day. Marculf was building a monastery on some land given to him by King Childebert on the seashore at Nanteuil. Sometimes he would retire to a small island that still bears his name.

Three months after his baptism, Helier asked his spiritual father to find a lonely place where he could devote himself to prayer and fasting. He sent him with a priest called Romard to the island of Agnus, now called Jersey, which was inhabited by pagan Celts. According to another source, Jersey's community of fishermen asked Marculf to send them a missionary, and he chose St. Helier.

The saint took up his abode on a rock in St. Aubins' bay which is connected to the mainland by a narrow causeway that is covered by the sea at high tide. Soon the sick were again coming to Helier for healing. A cripple and a paralytic were healed by him.

Three years later, Marculf arrived with a priest to visit his disciple. One day, Romard saw a fleet of Saxons approaching the island. He rushed to the cell of Helier, and then both went to Marculf. The three cast themselves on their knees on the top of the bare crag and prayed for deliverance.

The terrified islanders, who were about thirty in number, also asked Marculf to pray for them. "My children," he said, "Be courageous, take up your arms, God is powerful enough to make you triumph, He will fight for you. Remember how he made the armies of Pharaoh perish. I promise you victory. Go."

They believed him, armed and marched against the enemy. All those who stepped foot on the island were killed without the islanders losing a single man. Meanwhile, those who remained in their boats were overwhelmed by a storm. Nobody survived to tell their story to their countrymen.

On seeing what had happened, the chief of the islanders gave thanks to God and gave St. Marcul half of the island. There he built a monastery in which he placed a few monks. Then he left, taking Romard with him but leaving one of his disciples to be the young Helier's guide.

For twelve years Helier continued to struggle on his rock. Then, one night in the year 555, as he was resting on his stone couch, the Lord appeared to him and, smiling, said: "Come to Me, My beloved. In three days you will leave this world adorned in your own blood." In the morning his spiritual guide came to him, as he always did, when the rock was joined to the mainland, and Helier told him about the vision.

On the third day St. Helier arose and looked towards the sea. A strong south-westerly wind was blowing, and the sea was covered with a fleet of Saxon ships. Knowing that he would suffer at their hands, he went back to his cell that he might die, as he had lived, in prayer. After some time, the pagans saw the cell overhanging the tossing waves. They climbed up the cliff, entered the cell and beheaded the holy martyr.

The Saxons became terrified at this awful murder, and although the weather was stormy, they immediately put to sea. But when nearing Noirmont their ship struck a rock and they all perished.

The next day, Romard found his body on the beach opposite the rock. The head was resting tranquilly on his breast between his hands, with a gentle smile on his face. The body might have been brought there by the tide. But how did the head come to be resting between the two hands? He took the body and laid it on the deck of a little vessel that was lying near. Exhausted with grief and anxiety, he fell asleep. When he awoke, he found himself on a coast that he had never seen. The vessel was swiftly gliding into a harbour, and men and women were standing on the shore, their eyes fixed on the strange sight of a boat being propelled with no helmsman. It stopped in the harbour of Breville-sur-Mer. The bishop of the place came down to the harbour in his vestments, and the body was borne in procession to the church with incense and chanting. A healing spring arose in the spot where the martyr's body had rested.

The very spot where Saint Helier lived and died, with the Oratory built over the cell in the 12th century, may be seen to this day. The monastery of Beaubec in Normandy possessed some relics of St. Helier. Eventually, the holy relics were housed in the Abbey of Lehon.

St. Helier is commemorated on July 16.

(Sources: John Henry Newman, *Lives of the English Saints,* London: Freemantle, 1901, vol. 3, pp. 13-43; *The Life of St. Marculf* (c. 640AD); http://user.itl.net/~geraint/helier.html; Donald Attwater, *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints*, London: Penguin, 1965, p. 166; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 28-29)

61. SAINT HERBERT, HERMIT, OF DERWENTWATER

Our holy Father Herbert lived as a hermit on an island in Derwentwater. Once a year he would travel to Lindisfarne to give his confession to his spiritual father, St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne. So devoted was St. Herbert to his spiritual father that he asked that they should die on the same die, otherwise his grief on remaining alone without him would be unbearable. St. Cuthbert prayed for this when the two met in Carlisle in 686. His prayer was granted: on March 20, 687, the two died – St. Cuthbert in Farne, and St. Herbert on his island.

William Wordsworth spoke of "the desolate ruins of St. Herbert's cell", and its circular foundation can still be seen on the island.

Holy Father Herbert, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Life of St. Cuthbert,* 28; *History of the English Church and People,* IV, 29; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, p. 336)

62. HIEROMARTYRS HEWALD THE WHITE AND HEWALD THE BLACK OF COLOGNE

In about the year 690, "two priests of the English nation, who had long lived as strangers in Ireland, for the sake of the eternal Kingdom,… went into the province of the Ancient Saxons (Germany), to try whether they could there gain any to Christ by preaching. They both bore the same name, as they were the same in devotion, Hewald being the name of both, with this distinction, that, on account of the difference of their hair, the one was called Black Hewald and the other White Hewald. They were both piously religious, but Black Hewald was the more learned of the two in Scripture. On entering that province, these men took up their lodging in a certain steward's house, and requested that he could conduct them to his lord, for they had a message, and something to his advantage, to communicate to him; for these Ancient Saxons have no king, but several lords that rule their nation; and when any war happens, they cast lots indifferently, and on whomsoever the lot falls, him they follow and obey during the war; but as soon as the war is ended, all these lords are again equal in power. The steward received and entertained them in his house some days, promising to send them to his lord, as they desired.

"But the barbarians finding them to be of another religion, by their continual prayer and singing of psalms and hymns, and by their daily offering the sacrifice of the saving oblation [the Divine Liturgy], - for they had with them sacred vessels and a consecrated table for an altar, - they began to grow jealous of them, lest if they should come into the presence of their chief, and converse with him, they should turn his heart from their gods, and convert them to the new religion of the Christian faith; and thus by degrees all their province should change its old worship for a new. Hereupon they, on a sudden, laid hold of them and put them to death; the White Hewald they slew immediately with the sword; but the Black they put to tedious torture and tore limb from limb, throwing them into the Rhine. The chief, whom they had desired to see, hearing of it, was highly incensed, that the strangers who desired to come to him had not been allowed; and therefore he sent and put to death all those peasants and burned their village. The aforesaid priests and servants of Christ suffered on the 3rd of October.

"Nor did their martyrdom want the honour of miracles; for their dead bodies having been cast into the river by the pagans, as has been said, were carried against the stream for the space of almost forty miles, to the place where their companions were. Moreover, a long ray of light, reaching up to heaven, shined every night over the place where they arrived, in the sight of the very pagans that had slain them. Moreover, one of them appeared in a vision by night to one of his companions, whose name was Tilmon, a man of illustrious and noble birth, who from a soldier was become a monk, acquainting him that he might

find their bodies in that place, where he should see the rays of light reaching from heaven to earth; which turned out accordingly; and their bodies being found, were interred with the honour due to martyrs; and the day of the passion of their bodies being found, is celebrated in those parts with proper veneration. At length, Pepin, the most glorious general of the Franks, understanding these things, caused the bodies to be brought to him, and buried them with much honour in the church of the city of Cologne, on the Rhine. It is a reported, that a spring gushed out in the place where they were killed, which to this day affords a plentiful stream."

(Source: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*)

63. SAINT HILDA, ABBESS OF WHITBY

Our holy Mother Hilda was born in the year 614, being the daughter of Hereric, a nephew of the Martyr-King Edwin of Northumbria. She was baptized together with St. Edwin by St. Paulinus, Bishop of York.

When her parents were living in exile in the British kingdom of Elmet (North Yorkshire), her mother Bregusit had a dream in which, as the Venerable Bede recounts it, "she was seeking for [her husband] most diligently, and could find no sign of him anywhere. But, after having used all her industry to find him, she found a most precious jewel under her garment, which, whilst she was looking on it very attentively, cast such a light as spread itself throughout all Britain; which dream was brought to pass in her daughter…, whose life was a bright example, not only to herself, but to all who desired to live well."

At the age of 33 Hilda decided to become a nun in the monastery of Chelles in France, where her sister Heresuid, mother of King Aldwulf of East Anglia, was struggling. After a year in France, she was called back to Northumbria by St. Aidan, bishop of Lindisfarne, and given a small plot of land on the north bank of the River Wear, where she struggled in asceticism with a few companions.

In 640 a monastery had been founded at Hartlepool by the first nun of Northumbria, Heiu, with the help of St. Aidan. According to another source, it had been founded by St. Bega, who had another foundation at St. Bees in Cumbria. Hilda became the abbess in 649. She organized a regular system of monastic life based on the Rule of the Irish saint, Columbanus of Luxeuil, and was instructed by St. Aidan and other men of God.

In the year 657 St. Hilda founded the double monastery of Whitby in North Yorkshire, which soon became one of the greatest monasteries in England, being renowned for its strict life and high standard of education in the Holy Scriptures. No less than five holy bishops - Bosa, Hedda, Oftfor, John and Wilfrid - were trained there. She was affectionately and respectfully known as "Mother" by all.

It was during St. Hilda's abbacy that the famous monk Caedmon lived in the men's monastery. After a heavenly visitor came to him during his sleep, he was able to compose wonderful religious poems in the English language; and he has been called the father of English poetry.

In the year 663 St. Hilda hosted the famous Synod of Whitby, which brought an end to the calendar schism between the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Churches in England. At first, she supported the Celts under whom she had been trained. But later she accepted the Synod's decision to adopt the Roman-Byzantine Paschalion.

During the last six years of her life, St. Hilda suffered from a chronic illness. At dawn

on November 17, 680, having partaken of the Holy Mysteries and admonished her spiritual children to have peace among themselves, she joyfully reposed in the Lord. At the same time a nun called Begu, living in the monastery of Hackness, which was about thirteen miles away, suddenly woke up at the sound of a bell, saw the top of the house open, and a strong light pour in from above. Looking earnestly at the light, she saw the soul of St. Hilda rising to heaven in the company of angels. When she told the abbess, Frigyth, about her vision, the abbess assembled all the sisters in the church to pray for the soul of the saint. And so when the monks came from Whitby to tell them the news, they were able to tell them that they already knew.

Already early in the eighth century St. Hilda's name is found on the *Calendar of St. Willibrord*, and her veneration was always strong in the North of England. Whitby was sacked by the Danes in about the year 800. St. Hilda's relics were translated to Glastonbury under King Edmund (+946), but Gloucester also claimed them.

St. Hilda is commemorated on November 17.

Holy Mother Hilda, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, IV, 23; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 192-93; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 344-345, 378, 386-388)

64. SAINT HYBALD, ABBOT OF HYBALDSTOW

Our Holy Father Hybald was born in the late 630s. In his youth he was probably a monk in Lindisfarne, where he got to know St. Egbert, the future abbot of Iona. At some time he visited Egbert in Ireland. Then, in about 660 he returned to England, perhaps with St. Chad. For it was in the diocese of St. Chad that St. Hybald became abbot of a monastery in Lindsey (Lincolnshire) in what is now Hybaldstow. The Venerable Bede says that he was a very holy and abstinent man.

The following prayer, from an eighth or ninth Worcestershire prayer-book, is attributed to St. Hybald: "I beseech God, the omnipotent Father, Who created heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is, Who is blessed God in all and over all for ever, that He discharge me of all my sins and misdeeds which I have done from the cradle of my youth until this hour of my life [and which] in deeds, in words, in thoughts, in sight, in laughter, in going, in hearing, in touch and smell, willing, unwilling, knowing and unknowing, in spirit and in body, I have committed in folly."

In 1866 the vicar of the church of St. Hybald in Hibaldstow found the remains of a very tall and powerful man in a stone coffin. It is thought that these may be the relics of St. Hybald. The stone coffin with the relics has now been reburied under the floor on the church on the south side of the chancel.

St. Hybald is commemorated on December 14.

Holy Father Hybald, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* IV, 3; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 201; Ian Thompson, *St. Hybald of Hibaldstow,* Scunthorpe: Bluestone Books; leaflet in St. Hybald's church; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, p. 265)

65. SAINT IWI, HIERODEACON OF LINDISFARNE

Our holy Father Iwi was a deacon-monk, a disciple of the great St. Cuthbert, bishop of Lindisfarne. Wishing to become an exile for Christ, he embarked on a ship with some sailors, trusting in the Providence of God to lead him wherever He willed. The ship landed in Brittany, and so the holy Iwi settled in that land, living the austere life of a hermit. He performed many miracles of healing, and died on October 6, towards the end of the seventh century.

About 250 years later, a group of clerics fleeing from Brittany arrived at the women's monastery of Wilton in Southern England, carrying the relics of St. Iwi. They left the relics on the altar during their stay. However, when they came to leave it proved impossible to move the relics. So with great sorrow they were forced to leave them there. The abbess gave them 2000 solidi in recompense for their loss.

St. Iwi is commemorated on October 8.

Holy Father Iwi, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Capgrave, *Nova Legenda Anglie*, ii, 91-2; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 207)

66. SAINT JOHN OF BEVERLEY, BISHOP OF YORK

Our holy Father John was born of noble parents at Harpham, Yorkshire in 640. As a youth he studied the Holy Scriptures, Church music, Greek and Latin in the famous school of Saint Adrian at Canterbury, and then under Abbess Enfleda at the double monastery at Whitby. After leaving the monastery, he used his great rhetorical gifts as a missionary to the unenlightened English. He was also endowed with the gift of healing.

On August 25, 687, John was consecrated bishop of Hexham in succession to Bishop Eata. Among the people he ordained during this period was the Venerable Bede, whom he raised to the diaconate in 692 and to the priesthood in 703.

During fast periods he would retire to a quiet house set among trees with a church dedicated to the Archangel Michael. It is now called St. John's Lee. Here he continued his holy life and the working of miracles. Thus the following miracle was related by Abbot Herebald, one of the bishop's clergy: "When in the prime of my youth I lived among his clergy, applying myself to reading and singing, but not having altogether withdrawn my heart from youthful pleasures, we came into a plain and open road, well adapted for galloping our horses. The young men that were with him, and particularly those of the laity, began to entreat the bishop to allow them to gallop, and make trial of the goodness of their horses. He at first refused, saying that it was an idle request. But finally, being prevailed upon by all, he said: 'Do so if you want, but let Herebald have no part in the trial.' I earnestly prayed that I might have leave to ride with the rest, for I relied on an excellent horse, which he had given me, but I could not obtain my request.

"When they had galloped backwards and forwards several times, with the bishop and I looking on, my wanton humour prevailed, and I could no longer refrain, and in spite of his refusal I joined the rest and began to ride at full speed; at which I heard him call after me: 'Alas! how much you grieve me by riding like that!' Although I heard him, I continued against his command. But as the fiery horse leapt over a hollow, I fell motionless and lost consciousness, as if dead. For there was a stone in that place covered with turf, the only stone in the whole plain. And it happened, as a punishment for my disobedience.., that my head and hand, which in falling I had clapped to my head, hit the stone, so that my thumb was broken and my skull cracked and I lay, as I said, as one dead.

"And since I could not move, they stretched a canopy for me to lie in. It was about the seventh hour of the day, and having lain still, and as it were dead from that time till the evening, I then revived a little, and was carried home by my companions, but lay speechless all night, vomiting blood, because something had been broken inside me by the fall. The bishop was very grieved at my misfortune, and expected my death, for he had an extraordinary affection for me. Nor would

he stay that night, as was his habit, among his clergy; but spent it all only in watching and prayer, imploring the Divine goodness, as I imagine, for my health. Coming to me early in the morning, and having said a prayer over me, he called me by my name, and as it were waking me out of a heavy sleep, asked whether I knew who it was who was speaking with me. I opened my eyes and said: 'I do; you are my beloved bishop.' 'Can you live?' he said. I answered: 'I may, through your prayers, if the Lord wills.'

"He then laid his hand on my head, blessed me, and returned to prayer. When he came to see me again a little later, he found me sitting and able to talk; and, moved by a Divine instinct, began to ask me whether I knew for certain that I had been baptized. I answered: 'I know for certain that I have been washed in the laver of salvation, for the remission of my sins.' And I named the priest by who I knew that I had been baptized. He replied: 'If you were baptized by that priest, your baptism is not perfect; for I know him, and I know that because of his lack of intelligence he was unable to learn the ministry of catechism and baptism; which is why I ordered him to desist from his presumptuous exercise of his ministry, which he could not duly perform.' Having said this, he took care to catechise me at that very time. Then he blew on my face, and I felt better. He called the surgeon and ordered him to close and bind up my skull where it was cracked. And, having received his blessing, I was so much better that the next day I mounted on horseback and travelled with him to another place. And when, a little later, I had completely recovered, I received the baptism of life."

In 705, on the death of Bishop Bosa, St. John became bishop of York.

Once, at the beginning of Great Lent, he healed a dumb man who used to come to him for alms by simply making the sign of the cross on his tongue. Another time, he healed a nun at the monastery of Wetadun (probably Watton) by praying over her. Once the bishop went to consecrate a church, and was urged to eat with a local nobleman named Earl Puch whose wife was sick. St. John sent one of the monks to the woman with some holy water that he had blessed for the consecration. After washing herself in the water, the woman rose from her sickbed and immediately, like the Apostle Peter's mother-in-law, served the bishop and her husband at table. Again, the bishop went to consecrate the church of Earl Addi at Cherry Burton. After the service, Addi asked him to visit his servant, who was lying mortally ill. The bishop saw the dying man with the coffin at his side and all those present weeping. Then he said a prayer, blessed him and said: "May you soon recover". Later, the servant asked his lord for a cup of wine, and the earl sent him a cup blessed by the bishop. Immediately he drank of it, he was cured and joined the earl and the bishop at the table.

Once the bishop was present at a great council of King Osred of Northumbria and his nobles. After the council, he was invited to a meal by the king; and during

the meal St. John ordered three jars to be filled, one with wine, one with mead, and one with beer. After the bishop had blessed the jars, they were found to be inexhaustible, recalling the miracles of the Lord Himself at Cana and in the feeding of the five thousand. Then King Osred called Brithred the butler to him and congratulated him, saying:

"Now we have been convinced of the sanctity of your lord by the virtue which we see".

Once during his travels St. John came to a beautiful spot in "a land of wild forests and waters, in the midst of which stood a church dedicated to St. John the Divine." From the nearby stream which abounded in beavers it was known as Beverley, "beaver stream". Here Bishop John bought some land, enlarged and beautified the church and made it into a double monastery which he richly endowed.

Once St. John came to the monastery at Beverley, as Abbot Brihtun tells the tale. After the bishop had inspected the monastery and conducted long services, the abbot suggested that he have a bath. And after the bath, the abbot offered the bishop some wine. The bishop assented, and Brithred the butler was ordered to take the glass of wine to him. But Brithred carelessly left the flask hanging in an exposed place on the wall, and it fell down and it broke. Miraculously, however, the wine did not run out but remained within the broken pieces of the flask.

The bishop liked to pray in the chapel of St. Martin in York, which was next to his house. While he was praying there, the Holy Spirit was seen hovering over his head in the form of a white dove. At the same time a blinding light was seen coming out of the apertures of the church, which amazed all those who saw it. At length, St. John's deacon, whose name was Sigga, unbolted the door, entered the church, and saw the majestic vision of the bishop praying with arms outstretched in a blinding light and with a snow-white dove hovering over his head. Immediately the skin of his face wrinkled up, as if it had been boiled. Sensing that he was being watched, the saint turned round. Coming up to Sigga, he healed his face by a simple touch, but warned him not to relate what he had seen during his lifetime.

Great crowds of people would come to the bishop when he was performing the sacrament of Holy Unction. Once they brought a dead man up to him, and after the bishop had anointed him with the holy oil, he arose. The bishop similarly used to drive demons out of people and healed the sick wherever he found them.

St. John resigned from his see in 717, consecrated his priest Wilfrid in his place, and retired to the monastery he had founded at Beverley. Four years later, on May 7, 721, he reposed, and was buried in the porch of St. John the Theologian. Through his prayers, many miracles continued to be wrought at his tomb after his death: demons were expelled, the blind, the deaf, the mute and the lame were healed, and

all kinds of sorrows were removed.

Before the great battle of Brunanburgh in 937, King Athelstan prayed at the shrine of St. John at Beverley. That night St. John appeared to him in his sleep and promised him victory. In gratitude, the king on returning from the battlefield endowed the church with many rich gifts.

In 1037 St. John was canonized by Pope Benedict IX, and Aelfric, Archbishop of York, translated his remains to a more costly shrine sparkling with gold and precious stones.

In 1065 Archbishop Ealdred of York commissioned the Monk Folcard of St. Bertin's monastery near St. Omer in France to write verses in honour of St. John and then his life.

Folcard relates many miracles of the saint. A blind boy brought from Hexham recovered his sight at his tomb. A Scot called Gillo, who was deformed, prayed on his own at the shrine of the saint on the eve of his feast and was healed. A criminal condemned to die repented. He invoked the help of St. John, and the chains fell from his arms. He went to Beverley and offered the chains to the shrine. A citizen of York had a favourite son who became dumb. He recovered when he was taken to Beverley Minster.

The stone chair of St. John is still to be seen in Beverley Minster. Later it became known as the "peace chair", and was probably used by an official investigating the cases of fugitives seeking sanctuary in the church.

During the Norman Conquest, a band of Normans marched into Beverley to pillage the shrine. Their leader, whose name was Toustain, seeing an old man dressed in gold bracelets, galloped towards him with his sword drawn. The old man fled, terrified, to the church. Toustain pursued him through the gates of the churchyard. But at that moment the horse slipped on the pavement and Toustain fell to the ground, stunned. The Normans regarded this as the wrath of St. John, and fled. Indeed, according to the twelfth-century writer John Brompton, the territory of St. John was the only land in the whole of the North of England which did not suffer from the depradations of the Normans.

St. John's shrine was probably destroyed by fire in 1188. But five years later his bones were discovered, and in 1308 the new shrine was completed. The relics were hidden during the Protestant Dissolution of the monasteries, but in 1604 they were found again in a case of lead. They were brought to light again when the nave was repaved in 1736, and are now interred in the Minster beneath a slab in the nave floor near the choir stalls.

St. John is commemorated on May 7.

Holy Father John, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *History of the English Church and People*; Folcard, *Vita Sancti Johannis Episcopi Eboracensis*; A. Thierry, *A History of the Norman Conquest of England*, London: J.M. Dent, vol. 1, pp. 215-216; Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition*, English *Orthodox Trust,* 1995, chapter 81; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 216; Ivor R. Dowse, *The Pilgrim Shrines of England*, London: The Faith Press, 1963; Pamela Hopkins, *St. John of Beverley*, Beverley: Halgarth Publishing, 1999; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 358, 372-373)

67. SAINT KENELM, MARTYR-KING OF MERCIA

The holy Martyr Kenelm was the son of King Cenwulf of Mercia (central England). There is some confusion about how old he was when he died. Nick Smith writes that "contemporary historical records show that he was 25 when he died. A letter from Pope Leo III mentions that Kenelm was 12 years old in 798. He signed documents and charters up until 811." However, according to another source, he ascended the throne in succession to his father in the year 821 when he was still very young. His sister Cwendritha became regent, while her lover Asconbert became the little king's guardian.

One night he had a dream which he related to his nurse Wolwere: "I saw, O dearest mother, a tree that reached to the stars standing by my bed, and I stood on the top of it, from where I could see everything. It was most beautiful, having wide-spreading branches, and it was covered from top to bottom with all kinds of flowers and glowed with innumerable lights. But as I wondered at the sight, some of my people cut down the tree, and it fell with a great crash, and forthwith I made for myself white wings and flew up to heaven."

"Alas," said the nurse, "my sweetest son whom I have nourished with my milk, I fear that the falling tree means the destruction of your life through the wicked plot of your sister and the treachery of your guardian, and the bird which went up to heaven signifies the ascension of your soul."

One day the king and his guardian were riding in the valley between the Clent and Romsley hills. The little king became very tired, and, having dismounted, fell fast asleep. While he was asleep, Asconbert dug a grave for him, and was about to kill him when he woke up. "This is not the place ordained for you to kill me," he said. Then he drove an ash twig into the ground, and it immediately grew and flowered. Undeterred by this miracle, Asconbert took the king to another place, and there struck off his head. The corpse was buried in the grace under the flowering ash tree with the blood-stained dagger by his side.

Asconbert then rejoined his partner-in-crime, Cwendritha, and the two returned to Winchcombe, where they spread the story that the king had mysteriously disappeared and was nowhere to be found. Cwendritha succeeded to the throne which had been purchased at the price of her brother's blood; but the whispering of her courtiers and her own guilty conscience pursued her everywhere. Desperately she ordered that anyone who should seek for Kenelm's body or even name his name should at once be beheaded.

When Kenelm was killed, and before his grave had been completely filled in, a white dove appeared at the base of his skull and flew away in the direction of

Rome. One morning, the Pope was celebrating the Divine Liturgy in Rome in the presence of many worshippers. Suddenly a snow-white dove appeared from above and dropped a scroll which it was carrying onto the Holy Table. Then it disappeared.

The scroll was written in English, but an English pilgrim who happened to be present translated it:

In Clent, in Cowbach, lieth under a thorn,
His head shorn off, Kenelm, king-born.

The Pope decided to send messengers to Archbishop Wulfred to investigate the crime and bring the criminals to justice. Guided by the scroll, they came to Clent Hill, and began to search between the hills in the little valley called "Cowbach". The lowing of a white cow and the shining of a radiant light led the searchers to the spot where the body lay under the tree. When it was discovered together with the knife, all the church bells in the region suddenly began to ring spontaneously. And when it was taken up from the ground a fountain gushed up which became known as a holy well because of the many miracles wrought through it.

As the body was being reverently conveyed to Winchcombe, the people came out from the town to meet their martyred king. At that time the queen was standing at the west end of the abbey church. Hearing the noise, she went out to see what was happening. Then, returning to the church, she seized a psalter and started to read Psalm 108 backwards, in the manner of those who practise black magic, trying in this way to halt the advancing procession. But when she saw the coffin her eyes fell out of their sockets, covering the psalter with blood. (For a long time afterwards this blood-stained psalter was shown to pilgrims.) She died in agony; and her body, refused burial, was thrown to the wolves and birds of prey.

The holy martyr-king was buried beside his father at the east end of the abbey church. Pilgrims flocked to the shrine, where many miracles were wrought through his intercession. In 1815, the two coffins were rediscovered, the one containing the body of an adult, and the other that of a young child together with a rusty knife. On being exposed to the air, the bodies crumbled to dust and the knife fell to pieces. The two coffins may still be seen in Winchcombe Abbey.

St. Kenelm is commemorated on July 17.

Holy Martyr-King Kenelm, pray to God for us!

(Sources: William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum,* 1, 94-95, 262-263; *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum;* John Humphreys, *Studies in Worcestershire History,* Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1938; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 231; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 232-233, 325-326)

68. SAINT LIDE, BISHOP OF THE SCILLY ISLES

Our holy Father Lide (Elidius) lived as a hermit on the Scilly Isles, off the south-western coast of England, towards the end of the tenth century.

King Olaf Trygvasson was once raiding the Scilly Isles, where "there lived a great friend of God, a hermit, famed for his excellent learning and various knowledge. Olaf was eager to test this, and dressed one of his retainers like a king, so that under the name of a king he might seek [the hermit's] advice. Now this was the answer he received: 'You are no king and my counsel to you is that you should be loyal to your king.' When Olaf heard this answer, he was yet more eager to see him, because he no longer doubted that he was a true prophet, and in the course of his talk [with him] and of the good man's exhortation, [the hermit] addressed him thus with words of holy wisdom and divine foreknowledge: 'You will be,' he said, 'a famous king and do famous deeds. You will bring many people to faith and baptism, thereby profiting yourself and many others. And, so that you may have no doubts concerning this answer of mine, you will have this for a sign. On the way to your ship you will fall into an ambush, and a battle will take place, and you will lose part of your company, and you yourself will receive a wound, and through this wound you will be at the point of death, and be born to the ship on a shield. Yet within seven days you will be whole from this wound, and soon you will receive baptism."

The thirteenth-century Icelandic historian Snorri Sturlason describes the sequel: "Olaf went down to his ships and there he met foes who tried to slay him and his men. But the meeting ended as the hermit had foretold him, so that Olaf was borne wounded out to his ship, and likewise was he well after seven nights. Then it seemed clear to Olaf that this man had told him the truth and that he was a true prophet… Olaf then went again to find the man, spoke much with him and asked carefully whence he had this wisdom whereby he foretold the future. The hermit said that the God of Christian men let him know all he wished, and then he told Olaf of many great works of God, and after all these words Olaf agreed to be baptised. And so it came about that Olaf and all his followers were baptised. He stayed there very long and learned the right faith, and took with him from there priests and learned men."

In fact, Olaf received confirmation (chrismation) from St. Aelfheah, Bishop of Winchester (+1012), and it was from King Aethelred of England that he received the bishops and priests who evangelised Norway.

As for the hermit who converted the famous king, we do not know his name with certainty. However, in the Middle Ages there was a cult of a bishop called Lide (or Elid or Elidius) who lived on the island of St. Helen's and was buried there as a bishop. Since the earliest pottery found at the remains of his buildings and tomb dates to the 11th century, it seems probable that St. Lide was the same hermit who converted St. Olaf.

St. Lide is commemorated on August 8.

Holy Father Lide, pray to God for us!

(Sources: *Epitome of the Sagas of the Kings of Norway; Heimskringla* 7, 31; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 246)

69. SAINT LUCIUS, KING IN BRITAIN

St. Lucius was descended from Bran the Blessed, of whom *The Welsh Triads* say: "There came with Bran the Blessed from Rome to Britain Arwystli Hen (the old man), Ilid, Cyndaw, men of Israel; Maw, or Manaw, son of Arwystli hen." Arwytsli has been very tentatively identified with St. Aristobulus, the first Bishop of Britain, who, according to the Greek *Menaion* for March 15, "was chosen by St. Paul to be the missionary bishop of the land of Britain, inhabited by a very fierce and warlike race. By them he was often scourged, and repeatedly dragged as a criminal through their towns, yet he converted many of them to Christianity. He was martyred there after he had built churches and ordained priests and deacons for the island."

Bran the Blessed is called by the *Triads*, "the first to bring the Faith of Christ to the Welsh from Rome, where he had been seven years as a hostage for his son Caradog". Caradoc, or Caractacus, was the leader of the heroic resistance of the Britons against the Roman invaders which was so vividly described by the Roman historian Tacitus. Caractacus was betrayed into the Romans' hands. But he defended himself with great dignity in the Roman senate, and Tacitus wrote: "Rome trembled when it saw the Briton, though in chains".

The exiled family of Bran the Blessed and his son Caractacus formed the nucleus of the first Gentile Christian community in Rome. Caractacus' daughter Gladys married a Roman senator and took the name Claudia after the Emperor Claudius, and it is under this name that the poet Martial alluded to her in his eleventh epigram:

Our Claudia, sprung, we know, from blue-eyed Britons.
Yet, behold, she vies in grace with all that Greece or Rome can show.

Claudia was the mother of several children, including the holy Martyrs Praxedes and Pudentiana.

The eldest son of Caractacus, Cyllinus, went back to his native land. He is mentioned in the family records of Jestyn ap Gwrgant, Prince of Glamorgan in the eleventh century: "Cyllin ab Caradoc, a wise and just king. In his days many of the Welsh embraced the Faith in Christ through the teaching of the saints of Cor-Eurgain, and many godly men from the countries of Greece and Rome were in Wales."

St. Lucius (in Welsh: "Lleuver Mawr", "The Great Light") was the grandson of King Cyllinus. In the year 156 he sent a letter to Pope Eleutherius in Rome asking to be made a Christian. (Evidently apostolic succession had died out in Britain.) In accordance with his request, he was baptized by a deacon of the Roman Church by the name of Timothy. Moreover, the Pope sent two missionaries by the names of Fagan and Dyfan, who settled with twelve disciples in Glastonbury. Lucius himself is said to have built the original church dedicated to the Archangel Michael on Glastonbury Tor, and is

credited with having founded an archbishopric in Llandaff in Wales, having been the first to give "lands and the privilege of the country to those who first dedicated themselves to the faith in Christ." The Churches of Gloucester and London (Cornhill) also claim Lucius as their founder. It is said that the second Bishop of London was Elfan, one of the messengers sent by Lucius to Rome.

According to Notker's *Martyrology* (894), St. Lucius later "abandoned the world, crossed the sea and converted many to Christ in Switzerland through his preaching and miracles". However, this is doubted by the Swiss scholar C. Simonett, who believes that the British King Lucius has been confused with a Lucius from Chur in Switzerland, where the "Brittoni", a Celtic tribe, were living, and who worked as a missionary against the Arians from about 550 to 600.

St. Lucius died on December 3, 201.

(Sources: Bede, *Ecclesiastical History,* I, 4; William of Malmesbury, *De Antiquitate Ecclesiae Glastoniensis*, 2; *The Triads of Britain*, 35, translated by W. Probert, London: Wildwood House, 1977; Notker, *Martyrology*; H.M. Porter, *The Celtic Church in Somerset*, Bath: Morgan Books, pp. 125-127; C. Simonett, *Geschicte der Storolz Chur, 1. Teil,* Chur: Calven-Verlag, 1976; Personal Communication from C. Simonett, September 19, 1979)

70. SAINT MILDBURGA, ABBESS OF MUCH WENLOCK

Our holy Mother Mildburga was the daughter of King Merewald of Hecani (South Shropshire and Herefordshire) and St. Ermenburga (Domneva), the daughter of Ermenred, brother of King Erconbert of Kent. She was the eldest of four holy siblings: the sisters Mildburga, Mildred, Mildgytha and the brother Merefin, who died young. Merewald was at first a pagan, being a son of the famous persecutor of the Faith, King Penda of Mercia; but he was converted to the true faith after receiving a miraculous vision which was interpreted to him by the Northumbrian priest Edfrith.

Goscelin, writing in about 1100, tells the story: "What I am now telling I have learned partly by reading and partly through conversation with a certain venerable old priest. He said that King Merewald of the Mercians was devoted to paganism when the holy priest Edfrith, a man famous for his learning and renowned for his life, was told by a heavenly message to come from Northumbia in order to convert him. As it is said, he himself undertook in accordance with this divine message to proceed to the land of the Mercians, to a place called Readesmith, and to preach there the word of God, to convert the king and his people, who were pagans, to Christianity. St. Edfrith therefore set off and started the task of preaching, not knowing the king and the district to which he had been ordered to go by heaven. From heaven he was told the way, and from heaven he was led to the place.

"Finally, therefore, he reached the place at sunset. Day was covered in night and the new visitor, lacking shelter, was protected in the open air during the night. Lest, however, he might become despondent because of the uncertain reason for his journey, he was visited by a divine power foretelling the king's conversion. For while he was sitting down to a small meal in the evening, having first paid to God due praises and prayers, he was approached by a huge lion with his mane bristling over his shoulders. When he saw the lion, the holy man, intrepid God-fearer that he was, did not give way to fear, but handed him a crust of his bread as if he were someone sent from heaven. The beast took this morsel handed to him, no longer like a lion but more gently than a lamb with a bland mouth, rolling on the ground before the feet of the provider as he calmly ate it. What more? Having eaten, the lion disappeared and the holy man spent the night in the same place.

"The sun returned to the upper sky, the sun shone forth golden bright. The visitor prayed, rose from the place and, having gone round the neighbourhood, found out where the king and his family were living. He was given a house to lodge in and was looked after by one of the king's soldiers.

"The following night the king had a dream and when he told it in the morning to his court none of his court could interpret it. The soldier remembered the guest that he had taken in, and just as Pharaoh was advised by his vizier about Joseph as

an interpreter of his dream, so he suggested to the king: 'My Lord King,' he said, 'your majesty should order that a certain man whom I received as a guest under my roof last night should be presented to you. His manners seem different from ours, and if I am not mistaken he is a disciple of the Christian Faith. For he denounces our gods and reviles them, and promises and threatens that our worship of them will bring the punishment of eternal death. Perhaps if he hears the dream of my Lord the King he will be, I fancy, no false interpreter of it.' The king said to the soldier: 'Let your guest be summoned quickly.'

"When the Christian ambassador had been summoned into the presence of the king, the king began to tell him his dream as follows.

"'Last night, while I was sunk in sleep on my couch, I seemed to see two foul and huge dogs tearing me by the throat. Then from the country a certain person of venerable appearance, with his hair shorn round his ears into a crown of locks, came to my help. He rescued me from the fangs of the dogs with a golden key which he carried in his hand. The vast size of the dogs and their ravenous attack on me terrified me, but I was comforted by my speedy rescue and the pleasing vision of my rescuer. But I do not know what such a foul vision, so wild and uncontrolled, holds for me, or who is meant by my rescuer...'

"The king had finished speaking and the disciple of Christ replied: 'You are to be congratulated on your dream, O king, for it tends to your eternal salvation. My king, listen and understand what good is portended by the horrible appearance of those attacking you and striving to throttle you, and what is foretold by the pleasant appearance of the key-bearer, your liberator. The huge foul dogs are the attendants of darkest Pluto, the enemies of your life and mortal salvation, to whose jaws you will be given as prey and food, and, having been devoured, you will always remain devourable. In this way you will always be dying and never end by death your perpetual terror, your sulphurous miasmas, gnashing of teeth, burning of fire, and vast and intolerable penalties by which you will be tortured by them in the middle of Hell. Unless you renounced paganism completely and are converted wholeheartedly to Christ, the Son of the Living God."

The priest then explained to the king that the key-bearer was the holy Apostle Peter who, together with the other apostles, holds the keys to Paradise whereby whomsoever he binds is bound and whomsoever he looses is loosed. The result of this sermon was that the king was converted to the holy Faith, in about the year 660. After removing his royal purple and crown, he repented in sackcloth and ashes and was baptized.

Then he founded a monastery, over which he placed Fr. Edfrith, and gave all his wealth for the building of churches throughout this kingdom, endowing them with rich farms and "families".

Shortly after, King Merewald and his wife Domneva decided to abandon the world and become monastics. So Domneva took Mildburga and her two sisters, Mildred and Mildgytha, - then aged about twelve, ten and eight - to her native Kent. And from there she sent her daughters to the convent of Chelles, near Paris in France, which had been founded by the Englishwoman St. Bathildes, Queen of France, and was a favourite school for the daughters of the English aristocracy.

On returning from France about six years later, the three holy sisters went different ways: Mildred went to her mother's monastery at Thanet; Mildgytha went to Northumbria; while Mildburga returned to her father's kingdom, to a monastery founded in 680 by King Merewald especially for her at Much Wenlock, in Shropshire - probably on the site of the present parish church at Much Wenlock, which contains fabric contemporary with St. Mildburga in the south aisle and the Lady chapel. The king placed this monastery under the direction of St. Botulph, abbot of Ikanhoe. Its first abbess was Liobsynde, a French nun from Chelles.

The saint was tonsured as a nun by St. Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, who was a Greek from Tarsus in Cilicia. In 685 her father, the former King Merewald, died and was buried in the crypt at Repton, which remains to this day. In 687, St. Mildburga was raised to the rank of abbess, while her spiritual mother, Liobsynde, retired to an estate of land at Hampton.

Under Mildburga's direction the monastery of Much Wenlock flourished "like a paradise". She was famous for her beauty, elegance and intelligence, but even more for her humility and chastity. Soon she was receiving donations of land from all over England. The list of donors in the ancient charters includes five kings and one prince, six bishops, four abbots, two earls and one nun. One of her properties was at Llanfillo in Wales, where a church is dedicated to St. Mildburga and where there were three large stones associated with the saint and believed to have healing power.

Once a neighbouring Welsh prince wished to take the saint by force and marry her. When she refused his advances, saying that she wished to remain a virgin, he became angry and pursued her on a horse. As she fled she came to the river Corve, which she crossed. But when her pursuer arrived, the river suddenly became so swollen that it was impossible for him to follow. St. Peter's church at Stanton Lacy was built near this spot. At what is now Stoke St. Milborough the saint was thrown from her horse and injured. Since no water could be found to bathe her wound, she ordered her horse to strike the rock with his hoof, and a spring gushed up. The holy well still exists.

It was in the same parish of Stoke that another miracle was performed by the saint. It was reported to her that some wild geese were devastating the fields of the

peasants. So she ordered the geese to remove themselves, and they did. And for years thereafter the geese would keep away from those fields. Hence the old peasant rhyme:

If old Dame Mil will our fields look over,
Safe will be corn and grass and clover;
But if the old Dame is gone fast asleep,
Woe to our corn, grass, clover and sheep.

One day, while she was praying in a little chapel in the garden, a poor widow came up to her and laid her dead child at her feet, beseeching her with tears to restore him to life. Mildburga was full of compassion for the woman, but she refused, saying that only God can raise from the dead. "Go, rather, and bury your child, remembering that you yourself will shortly follow him, for all mankind must die." But the woman persisted, saying that she knew that God always listened to the saint's prayers, and that she would not move from that spot until her request was granted. At length, St. Mildburga prostrated herself beside the body of the child and prayed as St. Benedict once prayed on a similar occasion: "O God, look not upon my sin, but on the faith of this woman who asks for the life of her child, and restore to life the body which Thou didst create." As she prayed a bright light encircled her, and it seemed as if she was on fire. When one of the nuns saw this, she said: "My lady, get up quickly and run from the fire: I see the whole of your body enveloped in a great flame." But at that moment the appearance of fire vanished, and the holy virgin arose and gave the child back to his mother restored to his former health.

The saint reposed in peace in the midst of her community on July 7 (February 23, according to another source) in about the year 715. Her last words were: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." After her death many miracles were performed through her intercession; but after the Norman Conquest, the location of her tomb was forgotten.

However, her holy relics were rediscovered in the year 1079, when the monastery was being rebuilt. Goscelin tells the story: "The monks brought over by Earl Roger had acquired, possibly as one of the costly ornaments with which Leofric had endowed his church, a silver casket reputed to contain the remains of St. Mildburga. The brethren decided to open the casket to verify this belief. They did so. The shrine was empty. Not long afterwards, one of the lay brothers, Raymond by name, in the church of the Holy Trinity which is about a stone's throw from the oratory of St. Mildburga, was doing some renewal and repair work to parts of the building over the altar that had fallen into disrepair. He noticed among other things an old box jutting out above the altar. Inside the box was a very old document written in Old English by a priest, Alstan. This stated that the body of

St. Mildburga was buried in the church near the altar. But a long time had passed since that altar had been above the ground. It had either disintegrated through the passage of time, or been destroyed during the desolation of the region. The monks obtained permission, indeed direction, from Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, to excavate and find the burial. But the actual discovery was inadvertent. On the vigil of St. John the Baptist, while the monks were celebrating the night office, an even occurred in the monastery of the Holy Trinity in the very place where the document said the holy body lay. Two boys were playing when the ground under their feet collapsed, and they sank up to their knees into a kind of circular pit. At the sight of this, Raymond, the lay-brother, ran off to the monastery of St. Mildburga where the brethren were chanting Mattins. As it was night, nothing was done until morning. Then, with tools, the ground was excavated and the bones of the Saint exposed, together with remains of iron bands. The sacred limbs had been buried in a wooden coffin. No signs of the altar mentioned in the parchment had yet appeared. On the following day the brethren began to dig throughout the whole church. Eventually there appeared beyond any possible doubt the foundations of the altar mentioned in the document, near to which, as was universally known, the holy body had been found the previous day..."

When a beautiful fragrance as of balsam pervaded the church, her body was taken up and many miracles were performed through it. People suffering from leprosy and blindness were healed. Once a woman was cured when she vomited a "monstrous worm".

In 1540, during the Protestant Reformation, St. Mildburga's relics were burned in the market place.

St. Mildburga is commemorated on February 23.

Holy Mother Mildburga, pray to God for us1

(Sources: Mary Gifford Brown, *An Illuminated Chronicle: Some Light on the Dark Ages of Saint Milburga's Lifetime*, Bath University Press, 1990; Old English manuscript Cott. Caligula A. xiv (10th c.); William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*; *Nova Legenda Anglie*; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 279; Janet and Colin Bord, *Sacred Waters*, London: Paladin, 1986, p. 121; *St. Mildred and her Kinsfolk*, Ramsgate, 1950; Christopher Jobson, "Saint Milburga", *Orthodox Outlook*, vol. VIII, no. 6, 1995, pp. 22-25; A.J.M. Edwards, "An Early Twelfth Century Account of Saint Milburga of Much Wenlock", *Trans. Shropshire Archaeological Society*, vol. lxvii, pp. 134-142; Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition*, English Orthodox Trust, 1995, chapter 82; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 299-300, 302)

71. SAINT MILDGYTHA, NUN, OF NORTHUMBRIA

Our holy mother Mildgytha was the youngest daughter of King Merewald of Mercia and his wife St. Ermenburga, and the younger sister of Saints Mildburga and Mildred. According to a tenth-century tradition, she became a nun in Northumbria and was buried there, "where her miraculous powers were often exhibited and still are". Goscelin, writing in about 1100, confirms this, and adds: "She cherished her folk with pious beneficence and was a benefit to her faithful people." However, according to another, thirteenth-century tradition she became a nun at Eastry in Kent and the successor of St. Mildred as abbess of that monastery, whence her relics were transferred to Lyminge in Kent in about 840, and then, in 1085, to St. Gregory's hospital, Canterbury.

Holy Mother Mildgytha, pray to God for us!

(Sources: An Old English manuscript *Caligula A. xiv* (10th century); *St. Mildred and her Kinsfolk*, Ramsgate: Monastery Press, 1950; Mary Gifford Brown, *An Illuminated Chronicle: Some Light on the Dark Ages of Saint Milburga's Lifetime*, Bath University Press, 1990, p. 46; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 279)

72. SAINT MILDRED, ABBESS OF THANET IN KENT

Our holy Mother Mildred was born in the seventh century, and was the second daughter of King Merewald of Mercia and his wife St. Ermenburga (Domneva), and the sister of Saints Mildburga and Mildgitha and "the holy infant Merefin". At about the age of ten, she was sent for her education to the convent of Chelles in France, which had been founded by the English slave-girl, later Queen of France, St. Bathildes. Mildred was received by Abbess Wilcoma (according to another account, Bertille), and by her humility and gentleness soon became a favourite with the other pupils, excelling them in learning and even equalling her teachers.

But then, when Mildred was about sixteen years old, a certain rich, good-looking young nobleman who was a near relation of the abbess fell in love with the saint. He proposed marriage, offering her lands, riches and honours. The abbess also pressed his suit, tempting her with gifts and the prospect of becoming a member of the royal house of France. But Mildred refused, saying: "I have come to school to learn, not to be married. I beg to be taught the discipline and fear of the Lord, and not the sin of ambition. Your entreaties terrify me more than your threats." The abbess was furious at this refusal; and after she had heated a furnace with a huge fire, she pushed Mildred into it, fastening the door. Three hours later she came back, expecting to find only ashes. But instead she heard the virgin singing in a clear voice: "Thou hast tried me, O Lord, in the fire, and hast found no wickedness in me." When the doors were thrown open, she appeared as if arrayed in gold. Everyone was terrified, as if the dead had come to life. The whole town was astonished, and multitudes came filling the house, the market place and the fields, counting themselves fortunate just to catch a sight of the virgin. For was it not a miracle that not one hair of her head or thread of her clothing was harmed?

Some days later, the abbess rushed at Mildred, threw her to the ground, stamped on her, kicked her, thrashed her, scratched her, pulled the hair out of head, and left her half dead. The virgin picked up the hair, and later, when she was transcribing a psalter in a way that she knew would be recognized by her mother, she placed it, still covered with dried blood, as if it were a relic of the martyrs, in the upper margin of the little book. At the same time she begged, with tears falling on the letter, that she might be delivered from the tribulations of her life, and rest in the Lord. St. Ermenburga, filled with compassion, wanted to set out immediately to rescue her daughter. But she felt her end was approaching, so instead she sent reliable people with some sailors to demand the return of her daughter from the abbess. The messengers were hospitably received, but the day of their departure was delayed; for the abbess in her rage and hatred of the English persuaded the bishop that Mildred should remain in France for the honour of the country.

Mildred serenely put her trust in God, and one night, in accordance with an agreed plan, she stole out and met her friends the messengers. After they had gone

a short way, however, she remembered with grief that she had left behind a nail from the Cross of the Lord, which she had obtained at great price and which she intended as a gift for her mother. She decided to return, while her companions waited for her. Having recovered the treasure, she ran back, and eventually reached the sea and the ships which were to take her away.

In the morning her flight was discovered, and amidst great commotion a thorough search for her was undertaken. The bishop was blamed for his inactivity, and the abbess agitatedly asked him to assemble an armed force and go after the girl. The saint and her companions were already on board ship, with everything in order and the sails swelling in the wind, waiting for the tide to change. But then in the distance they saw crowds of Frenchmen and cavalry in warlike array advancing towards them with a dull murmuring sound. The sailors, who were few in number and unwarlike, began to lose hope; for with the tide out, the ships were on dry land.

Suddenly the pursuers started to fight each other and kill each other. Seeing this, Mildred cried out in the words of David: "I have called upon Thee, O Lord, and Thou hast heard me. More and more do I cry, incline Thine ear and hearken unto me. O Thou Creator and Lord, Who hast made all things in heaven and on earth, and didst lead Thy people through the midst of the sea, deliver me from mine enemies that follow after me, and bring me in safety to my homeland and to my mother." Scarcely had she said this when the tide flowed in impetuously and the shore quickly became the sea. The sea floated the ships, caused confusion among the soldiers and fought on the side of the sailors. The rowers took to their oars, and with sails set the keels clove the waves, while the enemy in vain discharged their arrows and javelins across the water. Then Mildred like a new Miriam sang a song of praise to God.

After a pleasant voyage, they arrived at Ebbsfleet on the coast of Kent. As Mildred stepped out of the boat, her foot imprinted itself on the rock as if it had been soft mud. This indelible sign of her landing caused many cures. For sick people came, made a solution from the dust scraped from the rock, and were healed. The people enclosed the footprint in a shrine, and healings continued to be wrought there.

In 685, Mildred was tonsured a nun with seventy other novices by St. Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, in the monastery founded by her mother at Minster-in-Thanet, on land provided by King Egbert of Kent in compensation for the murder of her brothers the Martyr-Princes Ethelred and Ethelbricht. A few years later Mildred was consecrated abbess in succession to her mother by St. Theodore. (According to another source, she ruled the monastery together with her mother until the latter's death in 700.) And in 694 she attended and signed a council held at Bapchild near Sittingbourne where King Withred of Kent presided.

The monastery built and owned some ships, which may have conveyed grain from Kent to the London corn markets.

After ruling the community in an exemplary manner for thirty-five years, Mildred reposed in peace after a long illness in about the year 735 (according to another account, 725), on July 13. She was about 75 years old. In 741 her successor, St. Edburga, translated the relics of Saint Mildred to a new monastery built somewhat further inland, on the site of what is now Minster Abbey. At that time the holy virgin's body together with her vestments were found to be completely incorrupt as if she were sleeping. Many miracles were wrought at her tomb. In 742 the English Church under Archbishop Cuthbert of Canterbury canonized her.

Once, during the time of Abbess Edburga, a bell-ringer fell asleep while on duty. St. Mildred appeared to him, boxed him on the ear and said to him: "Understand, fellow, that this is an oratory to pray in, not a dormitory to sleep in". Then she vanished.

The monastery was destroyed by the Danes in about 840, and Abbess Seledritha, together with all the nuns, priests and lay brothers perished in the flames. The site became the property of the king. The bodies of St. Mildred and her sister St. Mildgytha were transferred to Lyminge, and from there, in 1085, to St. Gregory's hospital in Canterbury. According to another tradition, however, in 1027 the monks of St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury begged King Canute to give them the site and the relics of St. Mildred. He readily granted them the site, but promised them the relics only on condition that he returned safely from a pilgrimage to Rome which he made in 1031. In the event, he returned safely after having been rescued from shipwreck through the intercession of St. Augustine. And so Abbot Elfstan of Canterbury was granted his request.

The king's letter reached him on the eve of Pentecost. On the same day he came to Minster, accompanied by Provost Godwin and two trusted monks, Bennet and Rudolph. On the next day, since it was a great feast, he invited many of his friends and neighbours to a meal, so that no-one suspected anything.

When night came on, Elfstan and his three brethren went noiselessly to St. Mildred's shrine and tried to force it open. In this they were at first unsuccessful, but after much prayer the lid of the sepulchre was raised and the remaining relics of the saint were reverently folded in a white cloth and borne secretly away. The burden was light, consisting of fleshless bones, many of them already crumbled into dust.

The people of Thanet heard of what the monks were doing and rushed off in pursuit, arming themselves with swords and staves and weapons of all kinds. But

the monks had a fair start, and when the angry multitude first sighted them, they had already secured the ferry-boat at Saare, which belonged to their abbey, and were rowing over the broad waters of the Wantsum. And the pursuers, having no boat in which continue the chase, returned home.

Once Queen Emma, the widow of King Canute, being reduced to poverty and despair because she was in disfavour with her son, King Edward the Confessor, had a dream in which the saint promised to help her because she and her husband had permitted the translation of her relics from Thanet to St. Augustine's, Canterbury. Then Emma borrowed 20 shillings and sent it to Abbot Elfstan of St. Augustine's, and, miraculously, the king's heart was changed. Edward felt shame for the injury he had done his mother, begged her forgiveness and restored her to her former dignity.

Fifty-five years after the translation, a knight broke into a military storeroom and stole a large quantity of material. On the eve of the feast of the Translation of St. Mildred's relics, he was captured, closely confined in Canterbury Castle, and placed in fetters. But such was his devotion to the holy virgin that when the bell of the monastery began to ring, his chains fell off, his jailors were paralyzed and the prison doors opened before him. He rushed towards the shrine of the saint, and although the doors of the monastery were closed he clung so tightly to the window of the crypt that no-one was able to drag him away. Eventually the matter was referred to the king who pardoned the knight who was so evidently under the protection of St. Mildred. Some of the saint's relics have now been returned to Minster Abbey.

St. Mildred is commemorated on July 13, St. Ermenburga on November 19 and St. Edburga on December 12.

Holy Mother Mildred, pray to God for us!

(Sources: An Old English manuscript *Caligula A. xiv* (tenth century); Goscelin, *Life of St. Mildred* (eleventh century); William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum* (c. 1120); *St. Mildred and her Kinsfolk*, Ramsgate: Monastery Press, 1950; Frank Barlow, "Two Notes: Cnut's Second Pilgrimage and Queen Emma's Disgrace in 1043", *English Historical Review*, lxxiii (1958); Dom Gregory Bush, *Minster Abbey 670 to 1965*; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 48-49; Christine Waters, "'The Crown of Kent's Royal Race'. St. Mildred and her Kinsfolk (part 1)", *Catholic Life,* January, 2007, pp. 54-56; Christine Waters, "'The Crown of Kent's Royal Race'. St. Mildred and her Kinsfolk (part 2)", *Catholic Life,* February, 2007, pp. 51-54)

73. SAINTS HARDULF AND MODWENNA OF BURTON-ON-TRENT

Our holy Mother Modwenna (Modwen) was an Irish noblewoman by birth, who founded a monastery on a wild and uninhabited island in the River Trent in the late seventh century, which she dedicated to St. Andrew; hence its name: Andressey. For seven years she lived there with two other Irish nuns, Lazar and Althea. Then the three of them went on a pilgrimage to Rome.

On their return to England, they built another church across the river at Stapenhill in honour of SS. Peter and Paul. According to another source, she built a convent at Trensall in Staffordshire on land given her by the King of Mercia. After a time she retired to Andressey.

A holy hermit called **Hardulf** from Breedon heard of Modwenna's holy life and went to see her, bringing books of the lives of the Saints. He lived in a little cliff not far from Trent, which may be the "Anchor church" near Ingleby. He is almost certainly the holy hermit referred in the following story related by Abbot Geoffrey of Burton in about 1120: "There lived at Breedon a saintly hermit who heard of Modwen's reputation and used to visit her. He brought her writings on the lives of the saints which they read together, encouraging each other in their faith with the examples of the saints.

"One day the hermit arrived but had forgotten the book. Modwen was grieved, and they decided to send for it. The hermit instructed two of Modwen's companions where the book might be found, and Modwen instructed the two virgins to get into a boat and make all speed to fetch the book. They were rowing down the river when a strong wind sprang up which caused great waves on the Trent and filled the girls with fears of drowning and death.

"When they reached a place called Leigh the wind got up further and they leant to one side and the boat overturned. They sank to the bottom of the river, and were trapped under the boat.

"Modwen and the hermit began to grow anxious that they had been a long time. The thought occurred to Modwen that perhaps they had been drowned. She was desolate and blamed herself for having sent them and held herself responsible for their deaths. But the hermit consoled her, and suggested that they turned to prayer. They prostrated themselves on the ground and tearfully prayed to God for the lives of the girls. At length a bell rang and they rose, and noticed that a dry path had been miraculously opened up on the river bed. The water was divided in an astonishing manner into two parts, standing like a wall to the right and the left of the path.

"Modwen and the hermit set off at once down the path on the river bed and came to the upturned boat. On one side of it the girls' fingers were visible where they had clutched at the gunwale of the boat. The hermit tried to lift the boat but could not. It was as heavy and immovable as if it had grown roots into the river bed. He asked Modwen to try. She did so and the boat lifted as quickly and easily as if it had no weight at all. They found the two girls alive and well, safe and sound, preserved by the grace of God. There was mighty rejoicing and they all gave thanks to Almighty God for the miraculous saving of the girls, for his great wonders and the great marvels he had performed.

"Once the boat was turned right way up they all climbed in and at once the waters rushed back into the river bed and bore them along with waves so that it should be clearly understood that God himself had divided the waters and saved the girls in answer to the prayers of the two saints."

St. Modwenna worked many miracles. She died on July 5 while on a missionary journey to Scotland, at Lanfortin near Dundee. It is said that on her death her companions saw her soul being taken to heaven by silver swans, which became her emblem. Her body was returned to Burton for burial; she was reputed to be 130 years old. A shrine to her was built at the church on Andressey, but this was destroyed by the Danes in 874.

In 1002 a Saxon nobleman called Wulfic Spot established a monastery at Burton, and the relics of St. Modwenna were translated there in the first half of the eleventh century. By the beginning of the twelfth century Burton was known as "Mudwennestow", "the holy place of Modwenna". Some relics of her were rediscovered in 1201, and further miracles are recorded.

St. Modwenna is not to be confused with St. Modwenna of Scotland, or St. Modwenna of Northumbria, or St. Morwenna of Morwenstow in Cornwall.

Holy Hardulf and Modwenna, pray to God for us!

(Sources:
http://www.earlybritishkingdoms.com/adversaries/bios/modwburt.html;
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74. SAINT NECTAN, MONK-MARTYR OF HARTLAND AND HIS HOLY SIBLINGS

Our holy Father Nectan was born in the fifth century, being the oldest child of Prince Brychan of Brecon in Wales and his wife Gladys. Before begetting Nectan, Brychan went off to live the ascetical life in Ireland, but repented of abandoning his wife, and on his return begat a large family of sons and daughters - one for every year that he had unlawfully forsaken the company of his wife. Several of these sons and daughters later founded churches on the North Devon and Cornwall coasts.

Inspired by St. Athanasius' *Life* of the great Egyptian hermit, St. Anthony, Nectan decided to abandon his father's house and lead an ascetical life in a foreign land. So, going down to the sea-coast, he entered a boat and committed himself to the Providence of God. Eventually the boat landed on the North Devon coast near Hartland. Nectan soon found a convenient site for his hermitage, in a wooded, north-sloping valley next to a waterfall, which is now called St. Nectan's Kieve, near Tintagel. There he constructed a hut out of the branches and bark of trees, and set about living a hermit's life, eating only herbs and acorns and such-like things.

Soon news of the holy hermit spread, and his brothers and sisters set out to look for him. Having found him, they spread out along the coast, and each built for him or herself a cell in which to live the heremitical life. But every year they all assembled in St. Nectan's cell on the eve of the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ (January 1). There they conferred together on spiritual subjects and strengthened each other in their zeal for the Heavenly Kingdom. And afterwards they each returned to his cell mutually edified and rejoicing greatly.

Now there lived not far from the saint's hut a pious man named Huddon. He was a swine-herd, and one day as he was wandering in the woods looking for his lord's breeding sow with her young, he came upon the hut. Astonished at the sight of the saint, he was at first afraid to approach him. But then, plucking up courage, he went up and spoke to him. He asked him whether he knew anything about the sow and her young. Nectan told him where they were, and the swineherd took the animals and returned them to his master, telling him everything that he had seen and heard. When his master heard the story, he was filled with compassion for the saint in his poverty, and went and offered him two good milk-cows. St. Nectan accepted the offering gratefully, allowing himself to depart a little from his voluntary poverty so as not to offend the giver.

One day, as the cows were wandering through the woods, seeking richer pastures, two robbers came upon them and stole them. Then the saint set out in search of them, and came upon the robbers at a place called Newton. He began speaking to them about the Faith of Christ, but was cut short when they attacked and beheaded him.

But then a great miracle took place. For, taking his head up in his hands, the saint carried it for about half a mile to his hermitage and laid it all blood-stained on a stone. The traces of the blood shed by the martyr can still be seen on the stones of the stream in the little valley leading to his hermitage, which is called St. Nectan's glen.

Meanwhile, the robber who had beheaded him went completely mad, and after tearing his flesh with his nails and biting off his tongue with his teeth, he perished miserably. And the other robber, his accomplice, immediately went almost totally blind. But then, feeling his sight failing, and witnessing the terrible retribution meted out to his companion, he came to repentance. And following as best he could after the martyr as he held his head in his hands, and gathering up the blood from the holy body as it fell to the ground, he felt the progression of his blindness arrested. Glorifying God, he took the body and reverently buried it in the hut near the waterfall.

There is a tradition that shortly before his death St. Nectan threw his chapel-bell into the waterfall and prophesied that later, when the true faith will have returned to the land, a boy would find it. Much later, sometime in the nineteenth century, some people were drilling through the rock of the waterfall, hoping to find a hidden treasure with the bell. But then they heard a bell tolling and a voice which told them to go no further, because the boy who would find the bell had not yet been born...

In about the year 937, a young peasant from Hartland was called up to serve in the army of the pious King Athelstan against an invasion from the north led by Olaf, the Viking king of Dublin, and Constantine, king of the Scots. In the night before the battle which has gone down in history as the Battle of Brunanburgh (which was probably in what is now the Wirral), the young man was lying in his lord's tent, near the king's pavilion, when he suddenly felt himself seized by the bubonic plague, which at that time was sweeping through the English army. Terrified, he began to weep and groan and call upon God and St. Nectan. So loud were his cries that he disturbed the king and the others who were sleeping in the adjoining tents so that they could not sleep. After midnight St. Nectan appeared to the young man and gently touched the part of his body that was affected. The sick man was immediately cured. In the morning an inquiry was made who had disturbed the king's rest, and the young man was discovered and brought before the king. When the king saw how frightened he was, he told him not to be afraid but to tell him why he had been shouting so loudly. Then he said:

"I felt that this pestilence which is raging among the people had affected me, and I was possessed by uncontrollable grief, thinking that I would die unexpectedly on an expedition in a foreign land. And I began sorrowfully to call upon God, and to invoke again and again, among other saints, St. Nectan. And I was heard; for he came to me when I invoked him, touched the part affected by the disease, and drove the whole illness away from me."

The king asked him to recount the life of the martyr. The peasant told the story, and

then, plucking up courage, said:

"Begging your pardon, my lord king, I want to say that I trust in our Lord Jesus Christ and in the help of His martyr, which I have often experienced. And if you devoutly invoke him and commit yourself to his patronage, by his prayers you will obtain victory over the enemy and drive away the pestilence which is destroying the people."

The king accepted the wise advice of the young man, and promised that he would give the honour to the Lord and St. Nectan if he won the victory and returned safely with his men. God hearkened to the king's faith, gave him a great victory over his enemies, and removed the deadly plague which had been threatening his army. And so, when he first came to Devon, and was informed by his bailiffs that his manor at Hartland was reckoned to contain twenty hides, he gave two hides to the church of the blessed martyr Nectan, and as long as he lived had a special trust in his intercession.

During the period of the Danish monarchy, in the early eleventh century, God decreed that the relics of the holy martyr should be revealed. The revelation was made to Brictric, the devout priest of St. Nectan's church, in the following way. One night, while the priest was sleeping, there appeared to him an angelic man surrounded on every side with glorious light, who said to him:

"When it dawns tomorrow, take with you some religious and worthy men and enter the basilica of the blessed martyr Nectan, and in the part which faces north you will find the body of the holy martyr buried. Lift it out of the ground and put it in a more conspicuous position, so that it can be given the highest honour and due reverence by posterity."

The priest awoke and, being a simple soul, waited a little in order that he might prove whether that voice had come from God... And on the following night the angelic man again appeared to him in his dreams, shining with heavenly light, and warned him to fulfil the command which had been given him.

Then Brictric asked and obtained from the Lord that the heavenly vision should appear to him a third time. And so on the third night, as he rested in bed, the heavenly messenger appeared to him again, and first reproved him for not having obeyed. Then he showed him by a sign clearer than that given before where the sepulchre of the holy martyr was. Brictric joyfully went to his local bishop, Livyng of Crediton (1021-1046), and told him the whole story of his vision. But the bishop, despising the poverty of the priest, paid no attention to him. However, Brictric was not to be put off. With unquenched zeal he returned to his church, and summoned all the older persons of both sexes who lived in the parish to come together at that church.

And so when a considerable multitude both of clergy and people had assembled, he told them the whole story and ordered that a solemn three days' fast be observed,

in order that God might make his purpose plain to all.

At length, the three days' fast completed, Brictric together with the other priests and a devout multitude of both sexes took candles in their hands and went with the banner of the Cross at their head towards the place indicated in the vision. On arrival, the whole congregation prostrated itself in prayer. Then they arose, cleared the dust away from the pavement and the priests began digging while the rest of the clergy led the people in prayer.

For a long time they laboured without result, and all the priests except Brictric went away to rest a little, as if doubting whether their labour would be rewarded. But Brictric, who was taking the leading part in the work, did not leave, but, inspired by most fervent love, zeal and devotion, began digging still more eagerly.

Finally, the holy treasure was opened to him that knocked. For by the will of God he found a stone sculpture with figures inscribed on it, which was later placed on the altar built in honour of the martyr near his grave. Then, having taken away the stone which blocked the indenture, he smelled such a sweet fragrance arising from the sepulchre that one would have thought that all the spices and perfumes in the world were contained within it. At the same time a brilliant light suddenly shone down on them from heaven, dazzling the eyes of all who were present. Then, to the accompaniment of hymns and spiritual songs, they approached the sarcophagus, lifted the holy body from the earth, and placed the holy relics upon the altar consecrated in the name of the martyr. This uncovering of the relics of the holy martyr took place on December 4.

Now when Bishop Livyng heard the news, he repented of his unbelief and donated two bells and an immense amount of lead sufficient to roof the whole church, together with a most beautifully worked door.

In the sarcophagus, close to the martyr's body, they found his staff, which the people decorated in gold and silver and precious stones, and a bone seal depicting the bust of the martyr and with the letters SIGILLUM NECTANI inscribed upon it.

At the moment of the uncovering of the relics, a blind woman who was nearby, hearing the chanting of the psalms, ran up and asked that she might be led to the holy body. As soon as she put her eyes to the relics of the martyr, she recovered her sight and thanked God. Many other miracles were wrought at that time in the presence of the holy relics.

After the death of King Canute in 1035, his son Hardacanute succeeded him on the throne of England. For services rendered in battle, Hardacanute gave the royal manor at Hartland to Earl Godwin. (Godwin was the father of the last English Orthodox king, Harold II, who died at Hastings in 1066, and grandfather of Gytha, the wife of Great-Prince Vladimir Monomakh of Kiev.) However, Hardacanute's courtiers whispered

against Godwin, accusing him of fraud and treason. And so the king decided to destroy Godwin by a cunning stratagem. He gave him some a sealed letter and asked him to take them to Swein, sub-king of Galway. Now while Godwin was on his way to Swein, in the middle of the Irish sea, a great tempest arose. The passengers called upon God and His saints, and each implored the help of his special patron. But as soon as Godwin called on the name of St. Nectan, the sea became calm. Then the earl vowed to pay special honour to the martyr in future.

Meanwhile, Godwin's servant, a very prudent man, approached him and said:

"I have long been silently thinking my lord, that perhaps we are bearing Uriah's letters with us on this journey."

The earl replied that he could not imagine such a thing of the king. But his servant replied:

"With your permission, I will examine the letters in such a way as neither to break the king's seal nor to smudge the writing."

The earl agreed. The letter read as follows:

"King Hardacanute to his relative Swein, greeting. When you have received this letter, take its bearer, Earl Godwin, who has been guilty of devising treachery against me, and secretly put him to death."

At the request of the earl, the servant wrote another letter with the king's seal:

"King Hardacanute to his relative Swein, greeting. I command and entreat you to give the bearer of these presents, my great friend Earl Godwin, the fairest and best of my nieces as a wife."

And so, when Godwin landed, he went to the sub-king, gave him the letter, and within a month married Gytha, and brought her back to England with him. The king was greatly astonished at this outcome, but he went to meet him and greeted him with the kiss of peace. He bestowed many presents upon his niece and treated the earl with the greatest respect as long as he lived.

Godwin gave the church of St. Nectan, among other gifts, a mark of gold, with which the martyr's staff was gilded. And his wife, Countess Gytha, greatly honoured the church, giving it silk palls (today there is a stained glass window depicting her in the church). She introduced the clerics Ailman and Lemann and gave them the manor at Hartaton as a place to keep the valuables of the church safe from the Irish pirates.

In 1938, the Monophysite Emperor Haile Selassie, who was in exile in England, made the long journey to Hartland in order to pray to St. Nectan and spent a long time

prostrate in prayer in the church. After returning to his country, he ruled for a long time and was then killed by the communists in the 1970s.

Several local traditions concerning the saint have been preserved to the present day. One of these records that the saint once asked God that if anyone used the name of God in vain in his region, he would be punished in the following way. He would bite on his tongue, the tongue would swell up and nearly choke him, and the swelling would not go down for twelve hours. This gift was granted to him, and there is one recent instance of its exercise.

In 1972, Mrs. Olga Mount was staying at her cottage near Hartland with her eldest son and some of his student friends. She told them the story of St. Nectan, and the gift he had received from God to punish those who used the name of God in vain. The next day the students went sightseeing to St. Nectan's church and holy well, coming back in the evening.

The next morning, they were all having breakfast with the exception of one student. Suddenly this student appeared at the top of the stairs, and gestured to the others that he could not speak because his tongue was swollen. The other students laughed, because, as they explained, this student had the previous day mocked St. Nectan's well and used the name of God in vain. The student then motioned for a piece of paper and wrote down how he had bitten on his tongue during the night. It had swollen quickly, waking him up and nearly choking him. He came out in cold sweat and was thinking of waking up one of the others in his panic when he remembered his idle words of the previous day. Struck with fear, he sat up in bed and meekly asked God to forgive him. The swelling at once ceased to grow, and he sat for the rest of the night waiting for it to go down. The students laughed, but one remarked that he had been very careful with his language the previous day and had been surprised at the other student's carelessness. After several hours the swelling went down and the suffering student was able to eat his lunch.

St. Nectan is commemorated on June 17. His translation took place on December 4.

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Several of St. Nectan’s brothers and sisters are also counted among the saints. One of them was St. Clether, whose cell at St. Clether’s on the edge of Bodmin Moor, is one of the best-preserved cells in the Celtic lands. According to a different tradition, he was a prince in Wales who was so impressed by the exploits of St. Brychan in Wales that he became a hermit at Nevern, but later moved to Cornwall. St. Clether is commemorated on November 4.

Some miles down the coast from St. Nectan’s is Morwenstow, the church of his sister, St. Morwenna. Nothing is known about her life. There is a well dedicated to the

saint overlooking the sea. This is supposed to have arisen when the saint lifted a stone from beneath the cliff for the building of her church – when she put it down the spring arose.

Leland the scribe links this church with another Morwenna (or Modwenna) of the ninth century: "Morwenna grew up wise, learned and holy above her generation [at the court of Brychan]. Now it was when she had grown up to saintly womanhood, that Ethelwolf, King of Saxon England, besought King Breachan to send Morwenna to become the teacher of Princess Edith and the other daughters of his house. She came; she sojourned in his palace long years; and so gladdened the King by her goodness and her grace, that at last he was fain to give her whatsoever she sought. 'Sir,' she said, 'there is a stately headland in far Cornwall, called Hennacliff, or the Raven's Crag, that I have said my vows, "Would to God that a font and altar might be build among the stones of yonder hill!" Give men then, I beseech thee, My Lord the King, a Stowe for a priest in the scenery of my prayer.'

In the nineteenth century the famously eccentric priest of Morwenstow, Robert Stephen Hawker, claimed to have had a vision of St. Morwenna: "I know that Morwenna lies here: I have seen her, and she has told me as much; and at her feet ere long I hope to lay my old bones." St. Morwenna is commemorated on July 5. There are early Celtic crosses in the graveyard, and a Saxon font dating to about 950 in the church.

Another sister of St. Nectan, St. Endellion (Endelient) lived at Tregony on the milk of a cow, which was killed by the lord of Tregony because it strayed into his grounds. Her godmother caused the death of this lord, but Endellion raised him from the dead. Part of her tomb still survives in St. Endellion's church in Cornwall, and a church is dedicated to her on Lundy island.

Holy Monk-Martyr Nectan, and those with you, pray to God for us!

(Sources: 12th century Gotha manuscript translated by G.H. Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, Truro: Holywell Press, part 5, pp. 59-79; R. Pearse Chope, Presidential Address, *Devonshire Association Transactions*, vol. 58, 1926, p. 52; Robert Hunt, *Popular Romances of the West of England*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1930, pp. 280-82; Mrs. Olga Mount; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford, 1978, pp. 92, 141-142, 310-311, 312; Philip Docton Martyn, *Morwenstowe Church,* fifth edition, pp. 7, 8; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 170-171, 184-185, 196-197, 208-209, 211, 445; Dmitry Lapa, "Holy Martyr Nectan of Hartland", *Pravoslavie.Ru*, http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/80252.htm)

75. SAINT NEOT, ABBOT OF CORNWALL

Our holy Father Neot was born in the first half of the ninth century. He was of royal stock. When he had reached the age of military service, he decided instead to become a monk in the monastery of Glastonbury. There, by fasting, vigil and prayers he was counted worthy of great spiritual gifts. He cast out demons and healed both physical and spiritual illnesses. He became famous for his virtues, his learning, eloquence and wisdom.

St. Neot was short of stature, like Zacchaeus; and he used to celebrate the Divine Liturgy standing on an iron stool. Once this became the occasion for the working of a miracle. A noble came to the monastery and sought admittance. Neot, as the sacristan, came to the door; but the lock was too high for him to reach. Then by Divine power the lock was brought down to the level of his girdle, and he was able to open the door.

Now the saint felt oppressed by the crowds of people who came to see him, and, guided by God, he retreated with a single companion called Barry to a secluded valley in Cornwall, today's Neotstoke. This was surrounded by woods and hills, not far from the sea, and about ten miles from the monastery of St. Petroc at Bodmin. After about seven years, the saint made a pilgrimage to Rome to receive the Pope's blessing and seek his advice about his way of life. The Pope exhorted him to preach the Word of God to the people. And so, on his return, Neot built a monastery and gathered together some monks.

The saint used to chant the psalms standing in a pool of water, like St. Aldhelm and several of the Celtic saints. One day, while he was chanting thus, he heard many horsemen riding through the woods. Not wishing to be seen, he fled to his cell. But he left his shoe behind in the process, and so sent his cell-attendant to fetch it. However, a crafty fox had in the meantime come to the spot and taken the shoe. But the fox suddenly fell into a deep sleep and died, having the thongs of the shoe will in his mouth. When the saint's servant brought it back to his master, he was told to tell no one about the incident until after his master's death.

Another time, when the saint was again psalmodising in the pool, a trembling doe bounded out of the thick forest and fell at the saint's feet as if imploring his help. This was granted; for when the dogs came up, they immediately fled back into the wood, and Neot dismissed the doe unharmed. The huntsman was so astonished at the miracle that he threw away his arrows and implored the hermit's advice. Then, in accordance with the saint's word, he left the world and became a monk in the monastery of St. Petroc.

Near his cell there was another pool in which there lived three fish. It was

revealed to the saint by an angel that he should take one fish from the pool every day, leaving the other two, whose number would be restored by Divine power. One day, however, he was so ill that he could hardly eat anything; and his attendant, feeling compassion for him, caught two fish, and, broiling the one and boiling the other, urged the saint to eat. When asked where they had come from, Barry told the truth. The saint said: "Why have you done this? Why have you rashly presumed to act contrary to God's command?" Then, having ordered him to restore the fish to the pool, he prostrated himself in prayer, and did not rise again until he was told that the fish were alive and swimming again in their usual way. After that, he told Barry to bring one of the fish and prepare it for eating; and no sooner had he eaten it than he was healed of his disease.

Another time, some thieves came and stole the saint's oxen. After that some stags came out of the forest and tamely approached the brethren. When Neot saw this, he ordered the yoke to be placed upon the stags, and for a long time they did the work of the oxen. When the thieves heard of this, they repented, restored what they had stolen, and humbly came to the saint asking his forgiveness. And through the saint's advice they reformed their lives.

Sometimes King Alfred of Wessex came to the man of God asking for his blessing. The saint severely criticised the king for his proud harshness, bringing before him the humility of David as an example, and pointing out that Saul, who had been placed at the head of the tribes of Israel when he was small in his own eyes, was later condemned for his pride. Then he prophesied that the barbarians would invade the land and triumph by God's permission, and he would be the only one to escape, wandering as a fugitive over the land. "O King," he said, "you will suffer much in this life; no man can say how much you will suffer. But now, beloved child, hear me if you are willing, and turn your heart to my counsel. Forsake your wickedness; redeem your sins by almsgiving, and wipe them out through tears." And he urged him, when he would see his words fulfilled, not to despair, but to act like a man and strengthen his heart. For through his intercessions he had obtained from God that Alfred would again be restored to his former prosperity, so long as he ceased from doing evil and repented of his sins. And he further urged him to send gifts to the Pope, beseeching him to give freedom to the English School in Rome. This good deed would help him in his troubles. Alfred then sent the Pope as he had been advised, and obtained his request, together with several holy relics and a portion of the True Cross.

At length the holy man, exhorting the brethren to live in peace and showing them the way of salvation, lifted his hands to heaven and committed his soul into the hands of his Creator, on July 31, 877. A wonderful fragrance came from his body, which brought comfort and healing to many coming from far and wide. And even the earth from his grace, when received in faith, was found to

give healing to both men and animals.

It came about that when the saint's prophecy had been fulfilled, and Alfred was fleeing from the barbarians, the saint appeared to him in his misery one night, and told him that he would triumph over the enemy in the seventh week after Pascha (878), and that the Danish King Guthrum and his nobles would be baptised. Then, on the night before the battle of Ethandune, in the village of Iley, the saint again appeared to the king. He looked like an angel, his hair white as snow, his garments glistening and fragrant. He was carrying armour with him, and said to the king: "Arise quickly and prepare for victory. When you came here, I was with you, I helped you. So now you and your men go out to battle tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, Who gives victory to kings. And I will go before you to the battle, and your enemies shall fall by your arm before my eyes, and you will smite them with the edge of the sword." The next morning, during the battle, an invisible hand seized Alfred's standard and waved the English on. As a result, the Danes faltered and fled in confusion. Then the Danish King Guthrum surrendered and was baptised, in accordance with the prophecy.

Many years later, when a monastery was being founded at Eynesbury in Cambridgeshire, it was found that they did not have any relics. So a conspiracy was formed with the warden of St. Neot's shrine at Neotstoke in Cornwall. On November 30, 974, he stole the body of the saint, and arrived with it at Eynesbury (later renamed St. Neot's) on December 7. But the Cornishmen soon discovered the theft and traced the body to Eynesbury. So angry were they that King Edgar was forced to send out an armed force to drive the Cornishmen out of the village.

The relics of St. Neot at Eynesbury were inspected by Archbishop Anselm in 1086, who declared them authentic and also complete except for one arm left in Cornwall. Anselm himself gave his monastery in Bec a relic of St. Neot's cheekbone.

John Leland, travelling through England in the 1540s, saw the tunic of the saint in St. Neot's and his comb "made of a little bone of two fingers' width, into which were inserted small fishes' teeth, the whole having the appearance of a pike's jaw".

St. Neot is commemorated on July 31.

Holy Father Neot, pray to God for us!

(Sources: An early twelfth-century *Vita S. Neoti* in Latin, and an eleventh-century homily on the saint in Anglo-Saxon, in John Whitaker, *The Life of Saint*

Neot, the Oldest of All the Brothers to King Alfred, London, 1809; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 289-290; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 192-193)

76. SAINT NON, NUN OF CORNWALL

Our holy Mother Non (or Nun or Nonna or Nonnita) was the daughter of Cynyr of Caer Gwch, in Menevia, West Wales, and Anna, the daughter of Gwrthefyr Fendigaid. Cynyr was the sub-king of a region which afterwards came to be known as Pebydiog, or Dewisland. He was also the father of SS. Gwen (Wenn), Banhadlen and Gwestlan or Guistlianus, Bishop of Old Menevia.

Non, who was a very beautiful virgin, became a nun at Ty Gwyn monastery at Maucan near Whitesand Bay. Onc e she was met by Sant, or Sanctus, king of the people of Ceredigion. Falling in love with her, he raped her in a meadow. From this rape was born the great St. David, or Dewi, as the Welsh call him. It is said that at the time of St. David's conception two large stones, which had not been seen there before, appeared, one at the head of St. Non and the other at her feet. Also, a well sprung up near the chapel which survives to this day and whose water has healing properties. From this time, according to Welsh tradition, she lived on bread and water, and never knew a man again. However, according to Irish tradition, she was also the mother of Magna, mother of St. Setna, and of Mor, mother of St. Eltin. This had led modern authorities to consider that she may have been married to Sant, and became a nun only after his death.

Once the pregnant St. Non went into a church to offer alms for the birth of her child. By tradition this was the church of Caermorfa on Morfa Esgob. At that time a certain preacher – he is variously considered to have been St. Gildas, St. Ailbe, or St. Patrick – was preaching in the church. As the mother entered, he was struck dumb. When asked by the congregation why he had broken off his sermon and become silent, he replied: "I can talk to you in ordinary conversation, but I am unable to preach. But go outside and allow me to remain here alone, to see if I can preach under those conditions." The congregation went outside, but the mother concealed herself and hid in a corner, wishing to hear his words. Then the preacher again found himself unable to preach. Terrified, he cried out in a loud voice: "I adjure anyone who may be hiding from me to reveal himself from the place of his concealment, and to make himself known." Then she said in reply: "I am hiding here." Then he said: "Go outside, and let the congregation re-enter the church." They did so, and he preached in his usual manner with unfettered tongue. Then the mother, on being asked, confessed that she was pregnant; and it became obvious to all that she would bring into the world one whose teaching would excel that of all the teachers of Britain.

There was a ruler in the neighbourhood who had heard from magicians that a boy was about to be born in his realm whose power would extend over the whole country. They also told him where he was going to be born, so he went

to keep watch there. On the same day, St. Non was walking on the road leading to the place of the birth. Suddenly a great storm arose with thunder and lightning. There was so much hail and rain that nobody could go outdoors. But the place where the mother lay groaning shone with a brilliant light as if lit by the sun. On that spot a church was built, whose ruins can be seen to this day.

At some time after the birth of her son, St. Non took him to Altarnon in Cornwall, perhaps because her sister, St. Gwen, was the wife of Selyf, Duke of Cornwall, who lived at Gallewick, "between the Tamar and the Lynher". There is a fine old church dedicated to her at Altarnon, with a holy well and an ancient standing cross, and another church bearing her name at Bradstone in Devon, by the Tamar. There are further holy wells dedicated to her at Pelynt, Boyton, Grampound and Portscatho, as well as in the region of St. David's in Wales.

According to Cornish tradition, the body of St. Non lies at Altarnon. However, it appears more likely that she died at some time in the sixth century at the last place of her earthly pilgrimage, at Dirinon, near Brest in Finistère, Brittany, where there is a chapel with her tomb in it and a holy well. At Dirinon is also shown the rock on which she was accustomed to kneel in prayer, until she left the impress of her knees in it. According to Breton tradition, many miracles were wrought at her tomb, and the Bretons venerate her even more than her son.

The feastday of St. Non is March 3.

Holy Mother Non, pray to God for us!

(Sources: S. Baring-Gould and J. Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints*, 1907-1913, vol. 4, pp. 22-24; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 294-295; Rhygyfarch, *The Life of St. David*; Nona Rees, *St. David of Dewisland*, Gomer Press, Llandysul, Ceredigion, 2008, pp. 4-7; T. Thomley Jones, "Saint David", *The National Library of Wales Journal*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1978, p. 216; John McAsey, *Ancient Chapels and Churches in Wales*, Talybont, Ceredigion, 2003, p. 49; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 154, 448-449)

77. SAINT ODA "THE GOOD", ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Our holy Father Oda was born in East Anglia, of Danish parents. His father had been a soldier in the pagan Great Army that killed the holy Martyr-King Edmund of East Anglia in 869, and was opposed to his son's Christian leanings. So Oda left father and mother and all his possessions to attach himself to a pious man named Ethelhelm, who adopted him as his son and taught him the Christian faith.

Once Ethelhelm and Oda were on a pilgrimage to Rome. Suddenly the elder had a heart-attack. Oda resorted to prayer, and then gave his teacher a cup of wine over which he had made the sign of the Cross. On drinking the wine, Ethelhelm immediately recovered. News of this miracle reached the ears of the king. As a result, Oda, who was already a priest, was consecrated Bishop of Ramsbury in Wiltshire.

This took place in about 925. In 936 Bishop Oda was sent by King Athelstan to France to negotiate the restoration of Louis, the son of Emperor Charles the Simple, who was at that time in exile in England. In 937 Bishop Oda was present at the Battle of Brunanburgh, where by his prayers King Athelstan's sword was miraculously repaired, thereby saving his life. (According to another account, his saviour was St. Aldhelm.)

In 942 Oda was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, having become a monk at Fleury-on-Loire shortly before. As archbishop, Oda showed much courage and wisdom. He encouraged monasticism, issued decrees promoting good morals and asserted the independence of the Church from the secular authorities.

St. Oda was once celebrating the Divine Liturgy with tears, as was his custom. Suddenly he saw a drop of Blood flowing from the consecrated Gifts. Amazed and struck with fear, he called a priest and showed him the miracle secretly. "You should rejoice, highest Father," said the priest, "for today Christ the Son of God has honoured you, in that He Who is blessed above all has counted you worthy to see this with your bodily eyes." "And now I beseech the power of the ineffable God to return this His Body to its original form," said the archbishop. When he had prayed, he arose and found it as before, and partook of it with reverence. After the Liturgy, all the poor, the pilgrims, the orphans and widows were brought together and given food to the glory of that great miracle.

St. Oda greatly embellished his cathedral church at Canterbury, completely renovating and enlarging the structure erected by St. Augustine. It is said that during the repairs to the cathedral no rain at all fell on the city. He also brought to it the relics of St. Wilfrid from the ruins of Ripon Minster, while at the same time commissioning the writing of a new *Life* of the saint.

One of his last acts was to consecrate St. Dunstan to the episcopate. For when King Edwy died, and his brother Edgar ascended the throne of Wessex, he immediately recalled Dunstan from exile. And at a witan (parliament) held at Bradford-on-Avon, "by the choice of all Dunstan was consecrated bishop, especially so that he might constantly be in the royal presence on account of his far-seeing and prudent counsels". During the service, however, St. Oda paused at the point where the church to which the new bishop is to be appointed is declared, and, to the astonishment of all, named him bishop of the metropolitan see of Canterbury. Quietly resisting the objections of those around him, he said: "I know, dearly beloved, what God has spoken in me." The holy prelate said this through the Holy Spirit, foreseeing the grace that was to fill Dunstan. St. Dunstan later became Archbishop of Canterbury…

St. Oda reposed on June 2, 958, being called "the Good" by St. Dunstan, who never passed his tomb without kneeling. He was succeeded by Elfsin, Bishop of Winchester, a man of very different character. One day, after he had been elected but before he had received the pallium (omophorion) from the Pope, Elfsin was standing over Oda's tomb, and addressed him, saying: "Behold, O Bishop, here you lie prostrate, and I enjoy the rights of victory. While you were alive, I did not obtain them, but now that you are dead, I have taken them." Then he disdainfully struck the tomb with his staff and went away. That same night the weather was very bad. And St. Oda, clothed in hierarchical vestments, appeared to a certain priest and said to him: "Go to the bishop and diligently ask him why he mocked me yesterday and struck me with his staff." On awaking, however, the priest forgot the word of the saint. Again St. Oda appeared to him and repeated the same words. Again the priest kept silent – this time out of fear. On the third night the saint came to him and reproached him for his slothfulness, adding: "If you wish to preserve the prosperity of this sweet life of yours that you now enjoy, tell your bishop what you have heard." Taking courage from the saint's words, the priest went to the bishop, prostrated himself at his feet, and said: "There came to me, not Gabriel, the Virgin's messenger, but that glorious Oda, your predecessor, who ordered me to say these words to your Eminence with indignation: 'Since you despised me yesterday in word and deed, I tell you that you will cross the sea and climb the mountains, but in no wise will you sit upon the apostolic throne.'" The bishop dismissed this as an idle dream. But the prophecy was fulfilled to the letter: on his way to Rome to receive the pallium, Elfsin caught a cold in the Alps and died.

St. Oda is commemorated on June 2.

Holy Father Oda, pray to God for us!

(Sources: William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum,* I, 14; Saxon priest B., *Vita Dunstani,* W. Stubbs, *Memorials of St. Dunstan,* Rolls series, 1874; Anonymous, *Vita Oswaldi,* J. Raine, *Historians of the Church of York,* Rolls series, 1874, vol. 1; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 296-297)

78. SAINT OLAF, MARTYR-KING OF NORWAY

St. Olaf was born in 995, the son of a Norwegian lord named Harald Grenske, the great grandson of Harald Fairhair, and Asta Gudbransdatter. Olaf grew up in the household of his stepfather, Sigurd Byr of Ringarike. From the age of 12, he went on expeditions to the Baltic coast, Denmark and the Netherlands. Between 1009 and 1013 he fought under Thorkell the Tall against the English at London, Ringmere and Canterbury. For a time he was a captain of mercenaries for Duke Richard of Normandy, and in 1013 or 1014 he was converted to the Faith of Christ and baptized in Rouen. Then he entered the service of the exiled English King Aethelred and followed him back to England, where he fought on the English side at the taking of London Bridge. When the Danish King Canute conquered England, Olaf joined his service.

According to *The Saga of St. Olaf*, the two men were at first great friends. However, King Canute then became jealous of the younger man. Moreover, the Saga continues, "the bishop [St. Sigfrid, enlightener of Sweden] always waited for Olaf at Divine service, but not for Canute, and the bishop called Olaf king, and this Canute could not bear to hear, and spoke to the bishop about it in such strong words that the latter had to desist, because of the king's authority, for the king's heart was filled to overflowing with pride and ambition, because of his power and place. So things went on until it came to Lent. Then Canute began to speak to Sigfrid: 'Is it true that you called Olaf by the title of king this winter? Now how do you defend your words, when he has no settled country nor wears a crown?'

"'It is true, my lord,' said the bishop, 'that he has no land here, and he wears no crown of gold or silver. Nay, rather is he chosen and crowned by the highest Lord and Ruler, the King of all kings, the one almighty God, to rule and govern that kingdom to which he is born, and this special destiny awaits him, to rule a kingdom for the comfort and profit of the people, and to yield to God the fitting fruit of his coming into his kingdom. All the people in Norway and the lands tributary to it, and not these parts only, but no less the whole of the region of the north as well, shall have reason to remember and keep in mind this pillar and support of God's Christendom, who will root out all brambles and weeds from God's field and vineyard, and sow in their stead the noble seed of God's holy words. All these words will flourish and come to perfect growth, and every man who accepts them will himself be acceptable to the highest King of heaven, world without end.'

"King Canute said: 'You cannot be said to have made good the words which we are told you have spoken, my lord Bishop, declaring that he outshines us in miraculous virtues, above all if you make so great a distinction between us, that you declare that we show no virtues at all.'

"'You have heard rightly concerning these words of ours,' said the bishop.

"King Canute said: 'It avails me little, then, to chastize myself more than King Olaf, if I am bound to fall short of him in some respect, for now, since Lent has begun, I wear a linen and not a silken shirt, a scarlet kirtle, and not one of velvet or purple. I drink also ale and not mead. But Olaf wears a shirt of silk and a kirtle of velvet. He has the choicest foods prepared for him, and a vessel of wine stands on his table.'

"The bishop said: 'It is true, my lord, that Olaf wears a shirt of silk, but he wears a hair-cloth under the shirt, and a belt about his body so broad that it reaches from hip to shoulder-blade, and iron extending from it in front. You will always see that when King Olaf takes his seat and the choicest foods are brought before him, there is a mound in the place where he is wont to sit. There is hidden a cripple, and it is he that eats the dainties, but Olaf eats salt and bread. There is also a vessel of water, and this Olaf drinks, and has no more to drink than that, but it is the cripple that drinks out of the wine-cup.'

"Then King Canute was so enraged against Bishop Sigfrid, that King Olaf could not stay there because of the jealousy of King Canute, and a little later it went the same way with Bishop Sigfrid."

In 1015 Olaf and Sigfrid went to Norway, where Olaf succeeded in seizing the kingdom in spite of much opposition. First, by distributing money, and with the support of his kinsmen on the Opplands, he gained control of Ostland. Then, on Palm Sunday, March 25th, 1016, he conquered the country's principal chieftains, Sven Hakonsson Jarl, Einar Tambarskjelve, and Erling Skjalgsson, in the sea battle at Nesjar (between Larviksfjord and Lengesundsfjord). In the same year he was accepted as King at the Oreting in Trondelag.

He had a comparatively peaceful reign for almost 10 years, and during this period considerably advanced the unification of Norway. Olaf's work of unification assumed concrete form as territorial dominion over a kingdom which extended from Gautelven in the south up to Finnmark in the north, from the Vesterhav islands in the west to the forests toward the realm of the Swedes in the east. Olaf was the first high king who secured real control over the inland areas of Trondelag and Opplandene. Moreover, he gained a foothold for the Norwegian national kingdom on the Orkney Islands and Hjaltland.

Olaf also laid the foundation for nationwide local government and introduced a certain division of labour among the royal housecarls. He installed sheriffs recruited from the nobility and the landed gentry throughout the country and tried by means of his year-men to keep control of the political activities of the sheriffs. According to Snorre a division of labour seems to have occurred in the King's household into actual housecarls (military functions), guests (police functions), house chaplains, and churls (duties within the palace). Moreover, several titles of the masters of the King's court are known from this time: standard-bearer, King's Marshal, House Bishop.

With the aid of his English missionaries he succeeded in making Norway Christian. At the meeting of the Ting (Parliament) at Moster, Bomlo in Sunnhordland (1024), Norway acquired a nationwide ecclesiastical organisation with churches and priests, a Christian legal system and a first organisation of the Church's finances.

Gwyn Jones writes: "The Christian law formulated at Moster was of prime authority; it was read out at the different Things, and there are confirmatory references to it in the oldest Gulathing Law."

The king established peace and security for his people, remaking old laws and insisting on their execution, unaffected by bribes or threats. He built many churches, including one dedicated to St. Clement at the capital, Nidaros (Trondheim). All other faiths except Christianity were outlawed.

At the beginning of his reign St. Olaf did not enjoy good relations with Sweden; for the Swedish King Olof Skotkonung had seized a portion of Norway in about the year 1000. However, through the mediation of St. Anna, King Olof's daughter, it was agreed that St. Olaf should marry his other daughter Astrid, and relations between the two Christian kings were restored. In this way the foundations were laid for the Christianisation of the whole of Scandinavia.

After the death of the King Olof in 1022, St. Olaf made an alliance with his son Anund Jacob against Canute of England and Denmark. For Canute's hatred had not been extinguished; and the jealousy of this Cain was destined both to open a fruitful mission-field and to provide a martyr's crown for the latterday Abel. But in 1026 the allies were defeated by Canute at Helgean in Skane, Sweden.

Then, as Florence of Worcester writes, "since it was intimated to Canute, king of the English and Danes, that the Norwegians greatly despised their king, Olaf, for his simplicity and gentleness, his justice and piety, he sent a large sum of gold and silver to certain of them, requesting them with many entreaties to reject and desert Olaf, and submit to him and let him reign over them. And when they had accepted with great avidity the things which he had sent, they sent a message back to him that they would be ready to receive him whenever he pleased to come." So the next year (1028), "Canute, king of the English and Danes, sailed to Norway with 50 great ships, and drove out King Olaf and subjected it to himself," appointing the Danish earl Hakon, son of Eirik Jarl, whom Olaf had banished in 1015, as his viceroy.

Olaf decided to flee to Sweden and thence to the court of his kinsman, Yaroslav of Kiev, whose father, the famous St. Vladimir, had given shelter to Olaf Tryggvason in his youth. And it was the same Olaf Tryggvason who appeared to his successor and namesake one night and said: "Are you sick at heart over which plan to take up? It seems strange to me that you are pondering so much, and similarly that you are thinking of laying down the kingdom which God has given you, and moreover that

you are thinking of staying here and taking a kingdom [Bulgaria] from kings who are foreign and strangers to you. Rather go back to your kingdom which you have taken as your inheritance and have long ruled over with the strength God has given you, and do not let your underlings make you afraid. It is to a king's honour to win victories over his foes, and an honourable death to fall in battle with his men. Or are you not sure whether you have the right in this struggle? You will not act so as to deny your true right. You can boldly strive for the land, for God will bear you witness that it is your own possession."

In 1029 Hakon died in a shipwreck in the Pentland Firth on his way home to Norway. This gave Olaf his opportunity. Early in 1030 he set off for Norway over the frozen Russian rivers. When the sea-ice broke, he sailed to Gotland with 240 men. King Anund of Sweden gave him 480 more, but when he faced Canute's army at Stikrlarstadir, he had no more than 3600 men (Swedes, Jamtlanders from Northern Sweden, Icelanders and his Norwegian companions) against a peasant army 14,400 men - the largest army ever assembled in Norway.

Then, like Gideon, the saint decided to reduce his numbers by choosing only Christians to fight in his army. So he was eventually opposed by overwhelmingly larger forces. And as the sun went into total eclipse on July 29, 1030 (July 30, according to modern astronomers), his army was defeated and he himself was killed, as had been revealed to him in a vision just before the battle.

But immediately a great fear fell on the soldiers of Canute's army. And then miracles began to be manifested at St. Olaf's body: a light was seen over it at night; a blind man recovered his sight on pressing his fingers, dipped in the saint's blood, to his eyes; springs of water with healing properties flowed from his grave; and then, to the chagrin of Canute's first wife, Aelgifu, and her son King Swein of Denmark, his body was found to be incorrupt. Soon the penitent Norwegians expelled the Danes, and recalled Olaf's son Magnus from Russia to be their king.

The incorruption of Olaf's body was certified by his loyal Bishop Grimkel, whose see was Nidaros (Trondheim). As we read in *St. Olaf's Saga*: "Bishop Grimkel went to meet Einar Tambarskelver, who greeted the bishop gladly. They afterwards talked about many things and especially about the great events which had taken place in the land. They were agreed among themselves on all matters. The bishop then went into the market and the whole crowd greeted him. He asked carefully about the miracles which were related of King Olaf and learned a great deal from this questioning. Then the bishop sent word to Torgils and his son Grim at Stiklastad, calling them to meet him in the town. Torgils and his son did not delay their journey, and they went to meet the bishop in the town. Then they told him all the remarkable things which they knew and also the place where they had hidden the king's body. The bishop then sent word to Einar Tambarskelver, and Einar came to the town. Einar and the bishop then had a talk with the king and Aelgifu and asked the king to allow them to take up King Olaf's

body from the earth. The king gave permission, and told the bishop to do it as he wished. Then a great crowd assembled in the town. The bishop and Einar then went with some men to the place where the king's body was buried and had it dug up. The coffin had by this time almost risen out of the earth. In accordance with the advice of many, the bishop had the king buried in the ground beside St. Clement's church. It was twelve months and five days from the death of the king to the day his holy relics were taken up, the coffin having risen out of the earth and looking as new as if it had just been planed. Bishop Grimkel then went to the opened coffin of King Olaf, from which there proceeded a precious fragrance. The bishop then uncovered the king's face, and it was completely unchanged: the cheeks were red as if he had just fallen asleep. Those who had seen King Olaf when he fell noticed a great difference in that his hair and nails had grown almost as much as they would have done if he had been alive in this world all the time since his fall. King Swein and all the chiefs who were there then went to see King Olaf's body.

"Then Aelgifu said: 'A body rots very slowly in sand; it would not have been so if he had lain in mould.'

"The bishop then took a pair of scissors and cut off some of the king's hair and also some of his beard (he had a long beard, as was the custom at that time). Then the bishop said to the king and Aelgifu:

"'Now the king's hair and beard are as long as when he died, and since then they have grown as much as you now see shorn off.'

"Then Aelgifu answered: 'This hair will be a holy relic to me if it does not burn in the fire; we have often seen the hair of men who have lain longer in the earth than this man whole and unscathed.'

"The bishop then had fire brought in on a censer. He made the sign of the cross over it and put incense in it. Then he laid King Olaf's hair in the fire. And when all the incense had burned the bishop took up the hair from the fire and it was not burned. The bishop let the king and the other chiefs see it. Then Aelgifu ordered them to lay the hair in unhallowed fire. But Einar Tambarskelver ordered her to be silent and said many hard words to her. Then the bishop declared, and the king agreed, and the people deemed, that King Olaf was truly holy. The king's body was then borne into St. Clement's church and placed over the high altar. The coffin was wrapped in a pall and over it was placed a beautiful cover. And then many miracles took place at the holy relics of King Olaf."

King Canute did not oppose the veneration of St. Olaf, and churches dedicated to him were soon being built throughout the Viking world, from Dublin to the Orkneys to Novgorod. Forty ancient churches were dedicated to St. Olaf in Britain, and his feast occurs on several English calendars.

It was in connection with a miracle attributed to St. Olaf that a chapel was dedicated to him in Constantinople. Thus Bishop Ambrose von Sievers writes: "From other sources I have established that the Panagia Varangiotissa was situated by the western facade of Hagia Sophia, almost touching it. In about the reign of Alexis Comnenus (or a little earlier) St. Olaf was included among the saints of Constantinople and in the church of the Varangian Mother of God a side-chapel was built in honour of St. Olaf, while the old church itself was transformed into a church to which a women's monastery was attached."

According to the medieval Icelandic historian Snorri Sturluson, in 1066 as St. Olaf's half-brother, King Harald of Norway was preparing to invade England, he dreamed that he was in Trondheim and met St. Olaf there. Olaf told him that he had won many victories and died in holiness because he had stayed in Norway. But now he feared that he, Harald, would meet his death, "and wolves will rend your body; God is not to blame." Snorri wrote that "many other dreams and portents were reported at the time, and most of them were ominous." Harald was killed, in accordance with the prophecy of St. Olaf, at the Battle of Stamford Bridge in England.

St. Olaf is commemorated on July 29 and August 3.

Holy Martyr-King Olaf, pray to God for us!

(Sources: *Heinskringla. The Saga of St. Olaf*; *King Harald's Saga*, 82, translated by Magnusson & Palsson, Harmondsworth: Penguin books, 1966; Florence of Worcester, *Chronicle*; "The Life of the Holy Grand Princess Anna", *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. V, no. 1, January-February, 1983, pp. 14-18; *The Norwegian Encyclopaedia* and the *Svenska Uppslagsbok*, translated in *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. V, no. 3, May-June, 1983, pp. 27-30; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 300-301; Gwyn Jones, *A History of the Vikings*, Oxford University Press, 1984; Bishop Ambrose (von Sievers) of the Goths, personal communication)

79. SAINT OSWALD, MARTYR-KING OF NORTHUMBRIA

The holy Martyr-King Oswald was born in the year 604, being the son of the pagan King Aethelfrith of Bernicia. In 616, following on the death of his father, he was forced to flee with his six brothers and sister St. Ebba to exile in Scotland, where they were received with honour by King Donald Brecc. There he received the faith of Christ and was baptized on the holy island of Iona.

In 633, shortly after the death of King Edwin at the hands of Kings Cadwallon of Gwyneth and Penda of Mercia, and the apostasy of almost all the Northumbrians from the Christian Faith, Oswald advanced south with a small force into English territory. He was met by a vastly larger army under King Cadwallon at Heavenfield near Chollerford on Hadrian's Wall.

On the eve of the battle, as St. Columba's biographer, St. Adomnan, writes: "while King Oswald, after pitching his camp in readiness for the battle, was sleeping on a pillow in his tent, he saw St. Columba in a vision, beaming with angelic brightness, and of a figure so majestic that his head seemed to touch the clouds. The blessed man, having announced his name to the king, stood in the midst of the camp, and covered it all with his brilliant garment, except at one small distant point; and at the same time he uttered those words which the Lord spake to Joshua the son of Nun before the passage of the Jordan, after Moses' death, saying: 'Be strong and of good courage; behold, I shall be with thee.' Then St. Columba, having said these words to the king in the vision, added. 'March out this following night from your camp to battle, for on this occasion the Lord has granted to me that your foes shall be put to flight, hat your enemy Catwallon shall be delivered into your hands, and that after the battle you shall return in triumph.' The king, awaking at these words, assembled his council and related the vision, at which they were all encouraged; and so the whole people promised that, after their return from the war, they would believe and be baptized, for up to that time all that Saxon land had been wrapped in the darkness of paganism and ignorance, with the exception of King Oswald and the twelve men who had been baptized with him during his exile among the Scots.

"I, Adamnan, had this narrative from the lips of my predecessor, the Abbot Failbe, who solemnly declared that he himself had heard King Oswald relating this same vision to Segine the abbot."

The Venerable Bede continues the story: "On approaching the battle Oswald set up the sign of the holy cross and on bended knees besought God to send heavenly aid to His worshippers in the hour of their need; and the place is pointed out to this day and held in great reverence. Indeed it is said that when the cross had been quickly made and a hole made ready for it to stand in, Oswald himself, fired by his faith, seized it and placed it in its hole and held it upright with both hands, until

the soldiers heaped up the soil and made it fast in the ground. Thereupon he raised his voice and cried aloud to the whole army: 'Let us all kneel, and together pray the almighty, true and ever-living God to defend us by His mercy from a proud and cruel enemy; for He knows that the war we have engaged in for the deliverance of our people is a just war.' They all did as he had ordered and, advancing thus against the enemy as dawn appeared, won the victory as the reward for their faith. At the place where they prayed countless miracles of healing are known to have been wrought, a sure proof and memorial of the king's faith."

Although the remnants of the St. Paulinus' mission to Northumbria still existed under the leadership of Deacon James, St. Oswald preferred to send to Iona for missionaries to reconvert his newly-won kingdom. When the Irish bishop St. Aidan arrived, continues Bede, "the king granted him the island of Lindisfarne, as he requested, to be his episcopal see. With the ebb and flow of the tide, this is a place that is twice a day encircled by the waves of the sea, like and island, and twice rejoined to the mainland when its shore becomes exposed again. In all matters Oswald listened humbly and joyfully to the bishop's advice, and showed great concern to build up and extend the Church of Christ within his kingdom. The bishop was not fully conversant with the English language, and on many occasions it was delightful to watch while he preached the Gospel and the king himself, having acquired a perfect knowledge of Irish during his long exile, acted as interpreter of heaven's word for his aldermen and thanes.

"From that time many missionaries from Irish territory began to arrive in Britain as the days went by, who preached the word of the faith with great zeal to the English kingdoms ruled by Oswald; and to those who believed, such of them as held the rank of priest administered the grace of baptism. Churches were built in various places, and the people gladly flocked together to hear the Word. By the gift of the king estates and lands were granted for the establishment of monasteries, and English boys together with their elders were given systematic instruction by Irish teachers and taught to observe the discipline of a Rule."

From Lindisfarne many monasteries were built in various parts of the north. Thus there was Melrose, where the great St. Cuthbert became a monk, Hartlepool, where the first abbess was Heiu "the first woman in the kingdom of the Northumbrians to take the vows and habit of the religious life", Coldingham, where Oswald's sister St. Ebba was the first abbess, and Whitby, where St. Hilda was the first abbess.

Oswald also strengthened the faith in Wessex, where he became godfather of the first Christian king Cynigils and married his daughter.

St. Oswald, writes Bede, "was always humble, kind and generous towards the poor and towards strangers. For example, it is said that once at Pascha, when he

was sitting at dinner with the bishop, and a silver dish was placed before him on the table full of royal fare, they were about to raise their hands to ask a blessing on the bread when one of his officers, whose duty it was to bring relief to the needy, suddenly came in and told the king that a large crowd of poor people from every district was sitting in the precincts, asking for alms from the king. He at once ordered the meal that had been served to him to be taken out to the poor, and the dish to be broken in pieces and divided among them. When he saw it, the bishop who sat with him was delighted by the act of mercy, and took his right hand and said: 'May this hand never wither with age.' And his prayer and blessing were fulfilled, for when Oswald was killed in battle his hand and arm were severed from his body, and they remain undecayed to this day. They are preserved in the royal town named after Bebba, a former queen, stored in a silver casket in the church of St. Peter, and are venerated with due honour by everyone."

Bede also records that St. Oswald was a great zealot of prayer. Thus "it is said, for example, that he often remained at his prayers from the time of the office of Mattins until daybreak, and because of his frequent habit of prayer and giving thanks to God, wherever he sat he used to have his hands on his kness with the palms upward."

St. Oswald subdued Mercia and drove the pagan King Penda into exile in Wales. However, in 642 Penda gathered a large heathen army and, allying himself with the Welsh ruler of the mid-Severn valley, Cynddylan, he unexpectedly attacked Oswald at Maserfield (now Oswestry).

"But the man of God," writes Reginald of Durham, "hitherto renowned for his honour as a soldier, refused to consider flight, in case he should seem a man unskilled in the conduct of battle. He considered it dishonourable to be found vanquished and disgraced at the end, when hitherto he had appeared to all to be a vigorous and victorious warrior. And so he summoned a small force of soldiers and proceeded to commit himself to Christ, gladly choosing to die for the honour of the Lord and the faith of the Cross, and for the salvation and freedom of his Christian people... He therefore advanced to battle with great confidence, seeing that he was summoned by the Lord's mercy to a martyr's crown. Penda had gathered a large force of the heathen, and suddenly advanced to the field of battle, where he slaughtered a great number of the Christian people together with their holy and most Christian king."

Bede records that when the saint "saw that he was surrounded by enemy forces and about to be slain, he prayed for the souls of his army; and this is the origin of the proverb, 'God have mercy on their souls, said Oswald falling to the ground'."

Penda took the saint's head and hands and fixed them on stakes for a whole year, as an object of derision and scorn. But his head was later retrieved by his

brother Oswy, and was placed in St. Cuthbert's coffin, where it still remains. His right hand - the one St. Aidan had blessed - was placed in a silver casket at Bambrough, where it remained completely incorrupt until at least the twelfth century, as both Abbot Aelfric and Simeon of Durham attest.

At the place where he died - praying, with arms outstretched, for the souls of his men - many miracles were wrought. People took dust from the place and, mixing it with water, applied it with wonderful effect to sick men and animals. Once a house caught fire and burned down, and only the post on which some of the holy dust had been placed remained untouched.

"According to one account," writes Nick Smith, "St. Oswald was executed against a tree, which gives the name 'Oswald's Tree', or Oswestry for short. A raven picked up the king's severed arm, and dropped it on the ground a short distance away. Where it fell, a spring gushed forth. And that is the spring you can visit today."

In the year 697 Queen Ostrythe of Mercia, who was the saint's niece, and was later murdered herself, decided with her husband King Ethelred to translate the relics of the saint to the monastery of Bardney in Lindsey (Lincolnshire). But the monks of that monastery, entertaining a grudge against Oswald because he had once been king over that region, refused to allow the relics through the monastery gates. So they remained on a waggon covered by a tent throughout the night. However, during the night a great column of light was seen stretching from the waggon up to heaven, which was visible throughout Lindsey. Chastened, the monks brought the holy relics inside the gates, washed them with reverence, and placed them in a specially constructed shrine in the church with a gold and purple banner over it. The water used in the washing was poured away in a corner; but the earth which had received it was found to have the power of expelling demons.

In 909 the body was moved to a new abbey in Gloucester.

The head of St. Oswald is buried with the body of St. Cuthbert in Durham cathedral. Reginald describes its in the twelfth century as follows: "The roundness of the head, completely spherical, is extraordinary, and gives off a wonderfully sweet fragrance; it has a glassy colour, glowing a deep yellow all over which surpasses the yellowness of wax and is closer, in its great beauty and loveliness and in its gleaming brightness, to the appearance of gold. It is a sphere of large dimensions, in width, in length, and from front to back; and a smooth line, like the circle of a helmet, rises and falls around the middle of its curvature. Its bulk is considerable, but... when held in the hands it seems quite light, although to the eyes observers, judging by its size, it looks a heavy weight. The forehead is broad and prominent, the nose of moderate proportions. The length of the face and cheeks lend the face a certain nobility, clear testimony to his manly glory."

His fame quickly spread throughout the British Isles and into continental Europe, where relics of his body, including fragments of the wooden cross he erected at Heavenfield and earth taken from his grave, worked many miracles, several of which are recorded by the Venerable Bede. One of these took place at a monastery founded by St. Wilfrid in Sussex in the second half of the seventh century: "About the time that this province accepted the Faith of Christ, a dangerous epidemic struck many provinces of Britain. When, by God's dispensation, it reached the monastery, ruled at the time by the most religious priest of Christ, Eappa, it swept from this life many of the brethren, some of whom had come with the bishop, while others were South Saxons recently converted to the Faith. The brethren therefore decided to observe a three-day fast and implore God in His mercy to show pity on them, that He would preserve those who were in danger of death by disease, and deliver the souls of those already departed this life from eternal damnation.

"In the monastery at this time there lived a little Saxon boy, who had recently been converted to the Faith; this child had caught the disease, and for a long time had been confined to bed. About the second hour on the second day of prayer and fasting, he was alone in the place where he lay sick, when, by Divine Providence, the most blessed Princes of the Apostles [Peter and Paul] deigned to appear to him; for he was a boy of innocent and gentle disposition, who sincerely believed the truths of the Faith that had been accepted. The Apostles greeted him very lovingly, and said: 'Son, put aside the fear of death that is troubling you; for today we are going to take you with us to the Kingdom of heaven. But first of all you must wait until the Liturgies have been celebrated, and you have received the Viaticum of the Body and Blood of our Lord. Then you will be set free from sickness and death, and carried up to the endless joys of heaven. So call the priest Eappa, and tell him that our Lord has heard the prayers of the brethren and regarded their fasting and devotion with favour. No-one else in this monastery and its possessions is to die of this disease, and all who are now suffering from it will recover and be restored to their former health. You alone are to be set free by death today, and will be taken to heaven to see the Lord Christ Whom you have served so faithfully. God in His mercy has granted you this favour through the intercession of the devout King Oswald, so beloved by God, who once ruled the people of the Northumbrians with outstanding devotion as their early king and whose Christian piety has won him an everlasting kingdom. For today is the anniversary of the king's death in battle at the hands of the heathen, when he was taken up to the joys of the souls in heaven and enrolled among the company of the saints. If the brethren consult the annals that record the burials of the dead, they will find that this is the day on which he departed this life, as we have said. So let them celebrated Liturgies in all the oratories of the monastery, either in thanksgiving for God's answer to their prayers, or in commemoration of King Oswald the former ruler of their nation, who has prayed for them as newcomers of his nation. Let all the brethren assemble in

church, and join in offering the heavenly Sacrifice; and let them end their fast and take food to restore their strength.'

"When the boy had called Eappa and told him all that the Apostles had said, the priest particularly asked him to describe the clothes and appearance of these men who had appeared to him. 'They wore wonderful robes,' the boy replied, 'and their faces were very kindly and handsome, such as I have never seen before. I did not believe that there could be men so distinguished and wonderful. One of them was tonsured like a priest and the other had a long beard; and they said that one of them was Peter and the other Paul, and that they were servants of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, sent by Him to protect our monastery.' The priest then believed the boy's statement, and went off at once to consult his annals, where he found that King Oswald had indeed been killed on that very day [August 5]. So he summoned the brethren, ordered a meal to be prepared, Liturgies to be celebrated, and all the brethren to communicate as usual. He also directed that a particle of the Lord's Offering should be taken to the sick boy at the time of the holy Sacrifice.

"A little while later the same day the boy died, and his death proved the truth of what Christ's Apostles had told him. In further confirmation of his statement, no-one except himself died in the monastery at that time. Many who heard about the vision were wonderfully inspired to implore God's mercy in every trouble, and to adopt the wholesome remedy of fasting. And from that time the heavenly birthday of Christ's warrior King Oswald was commemorated each year by the offering of Liturgies, not only in this monastery but in many other places as well."

In 909, the eldest daughter of King Alfred the Great, Aethelfleda, "The Lady of the Mercians", brought the relics of St. Oswald from Bardney in Lincolnshire to Gloucester, where she built a small monastery to house them. The next year, on August 5, the feast of St. Oswald, Aethelfleda won a great victory over a pagan Viking army at Wolverhampton.

St. Oswald is commemorated on August 5 and October 8.

Holy Martyr-King Oswald, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*; St. Adomnan, *Life of St. Columba*; Reginald of Durham, *Life of St. Oswald*; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford; The Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 304-305; John Marsden, *Northanhymbre Saga*, London: Kyle Cathie, 1992; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 280, 300-301, 337, 340, 356)

80. SAINT OSWALD, ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

Our holy Father Oswald was the son of Danish convert parents, and was the nephew of St. Oda of Canterbury. After a certain time spent in a monastery in Winchester, he went for five or six years to the Benedictine monastery of Fleury-on-Loire. There he acquired a thorough knowledge of Benedictine monasticism and the writings of the Holy Fathers, distinguishing himself by his humility, obedience and the austerity of his life.

In 958, when St. Oda was dying, he called his nephew, who was now a priest, to his bedside. But when Oswald arrived at Dover from France, he heard that the saint had already reposed. He decided not to return to Fleury, but to go north to York, where another relative of his, Oscetel, was archbishop. Oscetel introduced him to St. Dunstan, and he, much impressed, introduced him to the king. And so, supported by both king and primate, he was elected to the bishopric of Worcester in 961. There he soon became the object of great love and veneration by the citizens.

Eleanor Duckett writes: "The Cathedral at Worcester was dedicated to Saint Peter. Since it was very small, it soon could not hold the people who came flocking to hear this new pastor preach. Outside it, on a side, level tract of ground, stood a little stone shrine, with a cross of top, marking the burial-place of Wifred and his wife Alta, benefactors of Saint Peter's. To this open space Oswald moved his congregation and taught as best he could, standing beside the old tomb. Soon the crowds compelled the building of a new and larger church; and when at last this was ready [in 983], the bishop consecrated it in honour of Mary, Mother of God. Then the little Saint Peter's, which before Oswald's coming had seen secular clergy in its choir, offered its services in union with this more splendid cathedral."

Meanwhile, in 962, Oswald had founded his first monastery, at Westbury-on-Trim, establishing in it, and later in Worcester, the regular Benedictine discipline. This was the first of several monasteries that he founded or re-founded in the Severn valley. At Westbury, as well as at the restored monastery of Winchcombe, he placed his disciple Germanus as abbot. And at Pershore he installed an abbot named Fordbricht, who had been trained under St. Dunstan at Glastonbury and St. Aethelwold at Abingdon. Pershore was enriched by some relics of St. Edburga, and was henceforth dedicated to SS. Mary, Peter and Paul, and Edburga.

But Oswald's most famous foundation was outside his diocese, deep in the fen-country of Huntingdonshire – Ramsey. Here, in 971, he introduced monks from Westbury and the famous scholar Abo of Fleury (who wrote the *Vita Edmundi*), and translated the relics of St. Felix of Dunwich and the holy Martyr-Princes Aethelbert and Aethelbricht of Kent. The land was donated by the pious alderman of East Anglia, Aethelwine.

Once Oswald and Aethelwine came to a feast at Ramsey. "There is an ancient tradition," writes Oswald's biographer, an anonymous monk of Ramsey, "that the whole of the main body of the congregation processed barefoot to the church of the Blessed Ever-Virgin Birth-Giver of God Mary, which custom was followed by the chief man [Aethelwine] as he walked with us with joyful heart together with his soldiers, the monks and the boys. But next to the church to which we had to go was a bridge, which we crossed on the way out. So on the way back we wanted to go quickly home by sailing across in a boat together with the precious relics. When the Liturgy was over, the prelate blessed the people; and we hastened to return home. But the boat was overloaded. When we were in the middle of the deep lake, and were about to sink, and the prelate was standing on the bank surrounded by his own people, he heard the sound of voices: 'Saint Benedict, help us!' On hearing this, he asked the reason, and on ascertaining it he raised his holy right hand and said, trusting in the Lord: 'May the blessing of Christ come upon us from above.' His clear voice came to the ears of the most merciful Redeemer more speedily than you could have finished the verse; and all were brought safely to land."

In 972, the saint was made archbishop of York while retaining the bishopric of Worcester until his death – a unique situation that testified to the honour in which he was held. This appointment gave him a vast sphere of influence, but also great responsibilities and difficulties. Since the Viking invasions of the previous century, when the North had been to a large extent repopulated by Danes and consequently repaganised, its loyalty to the English Crown and Church had been in question. Thus Kings Edmund and Edred had had to deal with uprisings of the Northumbrians, who first took Eric Bloodaxe, son of Harold Fairhair of Norway, as their king; then Olaf Cuaran, another Viking; and then Eric again. Finally, in 954, Edred regained permanent control of the North. Archbishop Wulfstan of York, who had sided with the rebels in both Edmund's and Edred's reigns, was imprisoned, and then, perhaps on St. Dunstan's advice, was brought south and given the diocese of Dorchester, while the Danish bishop of Dorchester, Oscetel, was given York. This was a bold move, but it worked – the Dane was better able than the Englishman to control his countrymen, and he was completely loyal to the English Crown. Indeed, both archbishops (Oda of Canterbury and Oscetel of York) were Danish at this time; and it says much for the wisdom, charity and lack of prejudice of the English leaders that they were able to welcome such a situation when the Danish wars had by no means receded from the people's memory.

Since St. Oswald was of Danish parentage, and, moreover, related to Oscetel, he was well equipped to continue in this tradition of racial reconciliation and missionary activity. However, the fact that he did not found a single monastery in his northern diocese shows the difficulty of the task he faced; and during the anti-monastic reaction during the reign of Edward the Martyr this diocese suffered as much as any. Thus in a memorandum on the estates of York, he states: "I, Archbishop Oswald, declare that all these lands which Archbishop Oscetel obtained in Northumbria, and which my lord

granted me for St. Peter's when he was at Nottingham, together with these other lands which are entered here besides, I had them all until [?] ascended. Then St. Peter was robbed of them. May God avenge it as He will."

Once when the saint was making a tour of the monasteries in his diocese, a messenger came to him from Ely announcing the death of a brother who had fallen from the walls of the church. He was saddened by this news, and asked the brethren of the monastery to celebrate thirty Liturgies and vigils for the dead man; which they did. He himself, meanwhile, returned to York, where he remained steadfast in prayer. One night Huna (for that was the dead man's name) appeared to him, and Oswald, seeing him stand opposite, said: "Who are you?" To which he replied: "I am he for whom you have been pouring out prayer to the Lord. I thank your paternity. Yesterday my soul was taken up to the refreshment of eternal salvation." In view of this appearance, Oswald ordered his clergy to celebrate the Divine Liturgy at daybreak. "When he came to us again," records his biographer, "he told us this story, saying: 'The Lord has heard your prayers; now the soul of the brother has been freed from punishment.' But we understand this to have happened through his prayers, for we have learned from the Scriptures that the prayers of a righteous man avail much."

On another occasion, the saint entered a hall in York after celebrating the Divine Liturgy. "Having commanded blessed water to be sprinkled through the house, he sat down and prepared to eat the good things of his Lord, blessing Him in His works. There is an ancient custom among the English that the people go up to the bishop or priest and, holding their hands in the shape of the Cross, receive some blessed bread from him before returning to their seats and eating their food. And when he had given a piece to everyone, and they had reverently returned to their seat and were eating with gratitude, the father placed a piece of bread next to his seat. And he was happy, because the hall was full. Meanwhile, while they were all eating their bread, a wretched mouse, greedy in heart and mouth, boldly ate a crumb of blessed bread. But while he had the power to touch it, he could not swallow it. For that which is the guard of Christians was his downfall. After a while, some notables from the city came in bearing gifts for the lovable man. As was the custom, he received them with thanks. He stretched out his hand to take that which he had placed nearby. But then he saw the wretched mouse lying there dead. Neither knowing nor caring why this had taken place, he ordered the dead mouse to be thrown out. But his servers were not slow to point out why this happened."

The saint performed many miracles during his life on earth. Thus once he drove away a demon that was preventing the removal of a large stone, and on another occasion he healed a sick man with blessed bread. Again, a terrified server once saw an angel serving with him at the Divine Liturgy.

In 991 the saint visited Ramsey for the last time, to reopen the church which had been damaged by the fall of the tower. Two days later, announcing that his death was

approaching, he made his last farewells to the monks. Then he returned to Worcester, where he spent the winter.

After morning prayers on Holy Thursday, February 29, 992, St. Oswald came, as was his custom, to wash the feet of twelve poor men, chanting in the meantime the fifteen psalms of degrees. At the end of the psalms, the brethren bent their knees, saying, "The Lord bless thee out of Sion, He that made heaven and the earth". "Then blessed Oswald," continues his biographer, "also bent the knee with them before the feet of the Lord, and as he was saying 'Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit', by the secret command of God his holy spirit left his body and was taken up to the heights of the eternal Kingdom… Then the brethren washed the beloved body of Oswald and clothed it in new vestments for the funeral… But since the death of such a great father could not be kept hidden, lamentation quickly spread through the houses, castles and countryside. And merchants left their markets, women their looms, hurrying to the door of the man of God. Orphans and widows, strangers, peasants, monks and clergy, all groaned with great sorrow and wept."

Many miracles took place at the tomb of the saint; and in response to these and a special heavenly revelation, Archbishop Erdulf of York translated the holy body on April 15, 1004. A great multitude was present at the translation, one of whom, a woman with a paralysed hand, was healed of her infirmity. However, there was also an abbot there who by his words and gestures tried to cast doubt on the whole proceedings. This saddened the bishops and other good men, and they turned to Christ in prayer that the doubter might be convinced and St. Oswald glorified. While they were praying a sufferer was brought into their midst who was lame and covered all over with leprosy. He was placed beside the body of the saint. After prayers he was found completely healed. Seeing this, the crowd rejoiced and praised God, while the former doubters prostrated themselves in tears to the ground, asking forgiveness for their sin.

The bones of the saint were then washed and placed in a reliquary at Worcester. Many healings were wrought through the water used in the washing; the blind saw, the deaf heard, and the infirm were restored to full strength. All the clothes of the saint had been reduced to dust except his chasuble, which was completely untouched by corruption.

At the monastery of Ramsey, there was a very pious monk named Edwaker, who had a cancerous ulcer on his jaw. This became so bad and disgusting to behold that, in obedience to the abbot and his brethren, he betook himself to a small island near the monastery, where food was brought to him and his attendant every day. On St. Oswald's day he came to the monastery with his attendant and stood listening to the prayers in a hidden corner of the church. After the service, the brethren, taking pity on him, persuaded him to come with them to the refectory, although he was all for going back to his island. Now there was a custom in the monastery on that day to pass round the goblet which St. Oswald had drunk from during his earthly life. Every brother

drank from it and received a blessing thereby. Last of all it came to the sick brother. Recognizing the cup as St. Oswald's, he groaned and lifted up his voice and mind in prayer to God to heal him through the intercession of the saint. The eyes of all those sitting round were fastened on him, and the hearts of all joined in his prayer. Having asked a blessing from those around him, he drank. Immediately his ulcer disappeared, and for the rest of his life that side of his face was a little rosier than the other.

There was a citizen of Worcester who had been dumb from his birth, and who had the habit of going to church and standing in the place where the clergy passed most often, bending his head to show the humble respect which his mouth was not able to utter. One feastday, he came to the church and was standing in his usual place when he saw someone whom he did not know coming to him from the tomb of St. Oswald. This man had a venerable face and shining white hair, was dressed in priestly garments and was holding a staff in his hand. He came to the dumb man as he was inclining his head and struck him on the neck. Then he disappeared. At this blow a great mass of coagulated blood fell out of the man's mouth and onto the floor. "Help, help!" he cried. "Throw me out quickly, in case the church of the Lord is defiled by my blood!" So he was led out by those standing near, who were amazed at the very plentiful flow of blood. While he was washing he explained to them what had happened; and hearing the formerly dumb man speak, they were very ready to believe him.

Once Worcester was on fire through the negligence of its citizens. The monks brought the shrine of St. Oswald out of the church, meaning to take it to the part of the city where the fire was fiercest. But suddenly the light shrine became unbearably heavy. So they changed their route and came to the house of a poor man who was standing outside it sadly waiting for its complete destruction. On see the fathers, however, he cheered up and besought them to take the shrine through the burning house. This they did; and immediately the flames died out.

On another occasion, the city was again on fire, and the shrine of St. Oswald was carried to the burning part. A certain man who had just built a big house asked the monks to carry the saint's shrine into his house, saying: "Holy Father and Hierarch Oswald, look! I give you my house which is in danger from the flames. I place it under your dominion by perpetual right! Vindicate me, free me from this present danger!" At the intercession of St. Oswald, the house was preserved completely unharmed. An adjacent house, however, was completely burned down except for one log.

Again, a pestilence was raging through Worcester and the neighbouring villages. A healthy man would be walking or sitting outside his home when he would suddenly fall and die without confession or communion. The brethren of the church of the Mother of God then brought the shrine of the saint in a procession round the city, singing a litany meanwhile. Immediately the pestilence ceased, not only in Worcester, but also in the neighbouring villages whose inhabitants had come to take part in the litany and procession. But those who had disdained to take part were struck down.

The monks of Pershore were also hit by the disease. One of them asked his brother according to the flesh, a monk from Worcester, to take him to St. Oswald. A carriage was prepared, he was taken to the saint's shrine, and within a few days he was completely cured. But those who remained in the monastery soon died.

St. Oswald is commemorated on February 28.

Holy Father Oswald, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Anonymous, *Vita Oswaldi,* in J. Raine, *Historians of the Church of York,* Rolls series, 1874, vol. 1, pp. 399-475; Edmer, *Miracula Sancti Oswaldi Archiepiscopi,* in Raine, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 1-59; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 118, 305-307; Eleanor Duckett, *Saint Dunstan of Canterbury,* London: Collins, 1955; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 296, 326)

81. SAINT OSWIN, MARTYR-KING OF DEIRA

The holy Martyr-King Oswin was the son of the apostate Osric, king of Deira in what is now Yorkshire. On the death of his father at the hands of the Welsh King Cadwallon in 634, Oswin fled to the kingdom of Wessex for safety. After the death in battle of his cousin St. Oswald, in 644, Oswin returned to Deira while his cousin Oswy became king of Bernicia to the north. However, the two kings were not destined to live in peace.

Oswin was a man of great holiness and piety. He was tall and handsome, pleasant in speech and courteous in manner. He was generous to high and low alike, and soon won the affection of everyone by his regal qualities of mind and body, so that nobles came from every part of England to serve him.

Perhaps his greatest virtue was humility. Once he had given St. Aidan a horse to help him in travelling round his diocese. Not long afterwards, the bishop met a beggar who asked for alms. Without hesitation the bishop dismounted and ordered the horse with all its royal trappings to be given to the beggar. When the king heard about this, he asked the bishop as they were about to dine: "My lord bishop, why did you give away the royal horse which was necessary for your own use? Have we not many less valuable horses which would have been good enough for beggars, without giving away a horse that I had specially selected for your personal use?" The bishop answered, "What are you saying, your Majesty? Is this foal of a mare more valuable to you than this child of God?" At this they went in to dinner, and the bishop sat down in his place; but the king, who had come in from hunting, stood warming himself by the fire with his attendants. As he stood by the fire, the king turned over in his mind what the bishop had said. Then suddenly unbuckling his sword and handing it to a servant, he impulsively knelt at the bishop's feet and begged him forgiveness, saying: "I will not refer to this matter again, nor will I inquire how much of our bounty you give away to God's children." The bishop was deeply moved, and raising him immediately, assured him of his high regard, begging him to sit down to his food without regrets. At the bishop's request, the king sat down and began to be merry, but Aidan on the contrary grew so sad that he began to shed tears. His chaplain asked him in his own Scots language, which the king and his servants did not understand, why he wept. Aidan replied: "I know that the king will not live very long, for I have never seen so humble a king as he. I feel that he will soon be taken from us, because this nation is not worthy of such a king." This prophecy was soon fulfilled.

St. Oswin ruled the kingdom of Deira most prosperously for seven years and was deeply loved by all. But King Oswy to the north could not live at peace with him, and when their differences grew acute the two kings raised armies against each other. However, when Oswin realized that his opponent's forces were far stronger than his own, he decided not to risk an engagement but to wait for a more

favourable opportunity. So he disbanded the army that he had raised at Wilfar's Hill, ten miles north-west of Catterick, and sent all his men to their homes. Then he himself, accompanied by a single trusted soldier named Tondhere, went back and hid in the house of a nobleman named Hunwald, whom he regarded as his greatest friend.

But Hunwald betrayed him to Oswy, who, to the disgust of all, ordered his commander Ethelwin to put them both to death. This crime took place on August 20, 651, at Gilling. And here, at a later date, Oswy built a monastery at Tynemouth in expiation of his crime, ordering that prayers be said for both kings, slayer and slain.

In 865 the monastery at Tynemouth was destroyed by the Vikings. Among those martyred were some **nuns** who had sought refuge in Tynemouth from Whitby abbey. St. Oswin's grave was forgotten.

According to a twelfth-century monk of Tynemouth, the relics of the holy martyr were translated shortly after his death to a chapel built under a rock in the monastery founded by St. Oswald at Tynemouth. But the ravages of time and of the Danes had caused the exact place of the burial to be forgotten. However, there lived at Tynemouth in the eleventh century a man named Edmund who lived and dressed like a monk although he had not taken monastic vows. One night after a vigil he fell asleep in the church of the Mother of God, and as he slept there appeared to him a tall, strongly built man shining in a heavenly light. Awe-struck by his appearance, Edmund did not dare to ask who he was. At length the man said: "Brother Edmund! Brother Edmund!" Then Edmund asked reverently: "Who are you, my lord?" "I am King Oswin, killed by Oswy through the detestable treachery of Count Hunwald, and I lie in this church unknown to all. Rise, therefore, and go to Bishop Ethelwin, and tell him to look for my body underneath the pavement of this chapel, and let him raise it up and re-inter it more becomingly in this same chapel." As a result of this vision the body was sought and found. Judith, the wife of Earl Tostig of Northumbria, washed the martyr's hair, still stained with blood, but except for the hair and bones, the body had returned to dust. On August 20, 1065, the holy relics were solemnly translated into the new church of the Mother of God at Tynemouth.

Many miracles were wrought during and after the finding of the relics of the royal martyr, of which the following is one:-

There was a man from Norwich who had such reverence for the Holy Land that he had three times made the long and perilous journey to Jerusalem and back. On returning from his third pilgrimage, he decided to make another one to St. Andrews in Scotland. However, he was suddenly seized by a stomach illness; and, having arrived in Newcastle-on-Tyne, he was taken into the house of a pious

woman, the wife of one Daniel, who loved to entertain and care for strangers. But here he was again seized with a fit of convulsions, and filled the whole house with his pitiful cries. The hostess did what she could to comfort him, and eventually he fell asleep. In his sleep a man of reverend countenance appeared to him and asked him if he wished to recover from his illness. "Yes, sir," he said, "I desire it ardently." "Rise, then, in the morning," said the man in the vision, "and hasten to St. Oswin, king and martyr, so that next Tuesday you may be present at the Uncovering of his relics and by his prayers receive the health you desire." The sick man then asked: "But who are you, sir, who promises such good things?" "What have you to do with me? Go in faith and be healed." "Yet, sir," persisted the sick man, "I beseech you: do not be angry with me, but tell me who you are, that by the authority of your name I may be assured of the solidity of your promise." Then the man answered: "I am Aidan, formerly St. Oswin's bishop, and so that you may believe, I will now by my touch cure the pain in your head, leaving you to be healed of your inner convulsions by St. Oswin." So saying, he pressed on the nose of the sleeping man, and immediately a copious flow of blood took place, which relieved his head. There was a maid watching at the bedside of the sick man, and when she saw her patient covered with blood she called her mistress, who at the request of the sick man sent for the priest of the parish. To him he related the vision, saying that he had heard a little about Oswin, but he did not so much as know the name of Aidan. As he was unable to walk, one of the neighbours kindly offered to take him to Tynemouth in his boat. On arriving, they laid the sufferer at the martyr's tomb, where he was healed of his disease.

St. Oswin is commemorated on August 20.

Holy Martyr-King Oswin, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*; J.H. Newman, *Lives of the English Saints*, London: Freemantle, 1901, vol. 4, pp. 257-65; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford; The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 307; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, p. 371)

82. SAINT OSYTH, MARTYR-ABBESS OF CHICH

Our holy Mother Osyth was born of a noble English family, being the daughter of King Frideswald (or Frithuwold), the Mercian sub-king of Surrey, and Queen Wilburga, a daughter of King Penda of Mercia. Her parents, together with St. Erkenwald, founded the monastery of Chertsey in Surrey in 675. She was born at Quarendon, near Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire, and her childhood was spent in the care of her maternal aunts, the holy abbesses Edith of Aylesbury and Edburga of Bicester.

There is an old story that St. Edith once sent Osyth to St. Modwenna (it is not known which) in her convent, in order to point out to her a particularly interesting passage that she had discovered. To reach Modwenna, Osyth had to cross a stream by a bridge. The stream was swollen, the wind was high, and she was blown into the water, and remained there for two days before she was discovered. Modwenna was not expecting her, and so was not surprised by her non-appearance. But on the third day, St. Edith, wondering why her pupil had not returned with an answer to her message, went to Modwenna. Distraught, the two abbesses went looking for their charge, and found her lying at the bottom of the stream, holding the book open at the passage she had been told to show to Modwenna. The abbesses prayed, and then commanded her to rise from the water and come to them. This she did, and the dress and the book were quite unharmed.

After the death of St. Edith, Osyth returned to her parents, who gave here in marriage to Sighere, king of the East Saxons, although she had secretly taken a vow of virginity. Sighere had relapsed into paganism, but promised to return to the Faith after his marriage to Osyth. However, after the marriage ceremony, which took place in London, the capital of the East Saxons, when he wished to consummate the marriage, she refused. And she continued to repel his advances for a long time. One day he was trying to force her when a messenger entered, announcing that a deer of a colour whiter than snow was in front of the palace gates running around freely as if mocking the king and his men. When the king heard this he postponed rushed after the deer with his hunters and soldiers. The blessed virgin saw in this an act of Divine Providence, and, like a sheep snatched from the lion's mouth, she immediately ran to the holy priests (or bishops) Acca and Bedwin, humbly beseeching them to tonsure her so that she could keep her virginity. They looked with favour on her petition and tonsured her. When the king learned this on returning from the hunt, he sorrowed deeply. However, he did not dare to dissuade her, and allowed her to remain a virgin, giving her the seaside villa of Chich, in the territory of the East Saxons, in the year 653. There she remained for the rest of her life. Later, in 655, the king was converted to the Christian Faith by Bishop Jarman.

On October 7 in about the year 700, while Osyth was faithfully serving God in

Chich, some pagan pirates came and seized her and tried by both blandishments and threats to force her to worship the idols. But the blessed virgin spat on the blandishments and derided the tortures. Incensed by this, the pirate chief ordered her to be beheaded. On the spot a spring immediately bubbled up which had the power of curing diseases. When the saint had been beheaded she immediately stood up, took her head in both hands and with a firm step carried it to the church of Saints Peter and Paul, which was about three stadia from the place of the beheading. As she was entering the church she accidentally smeared the doorposts with her blood. These blood-stains were visible for centuries thereafter. Her family claimed her body and it was buried for a while in Aylesbury monastery. However, the saint intimated, by visions and other signs, that she chose to rest in her own monastery. So her venerable body was buried at the entrance to the choir of the church in Chich, where God worked many miracles through her intercession.

In the twelfth century, St. Osyth's relics were moved to a new abbey erected in her honour by Augustinian canons. Here they continued to work many miracles. Once the Bishop of London unjustly tried to take away some of the monks' rights along with certain of their lands. The monks took St. Osyth's relics out of the shrine and covered them with a cloth. Bishop Richard was paralyzed until he restored both their rights and their lands to the monks.

St. Osyth straightened a hump-backed woman and made the lame to walk. Once she cured a young woman's withered arm, in gratitude for which the woman vowed to remain a virgin. But then she married, and her feet were bound with an invisible chain. Another woman who had been healed by St. Osyth decided to be a servant of her sanctuary. Unfortunately, a man named Godwin seduced her, and her feet were twisted in the shape of the cross. Godwin asked the clergy to intercede with the saint; but in vain. Only on the day of her death did St. Osyth appear before the woman and unlock her feet.

In the Middle Ages, St. Osyth was the patron saint of people who had lost their keys.

St. Osyth is commemorated on October 7.

Holy Martyr-Abbess Osyth, pray to God for us!

(Sources: A.T. Baker, "An Anglo-French Life of St. Osith", *Modern Languages Review*, vi, 1911, pp. 476-502; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 302-303; Canon James Bentley, *Restless Bones*; Sir Arthur Bryant, *Set in a Silver Sea*; Christopher Hohler, "St. Osyth and Aylesbury", *Records of Buckinghamshire*, XVIII, 1966, part 1, pp. 61-72; Agnes Dunbar, *A Dictionary of Saintly Women*, 1904, http://www.britannia.com/bios/saints/osith.html; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 13, 121-

122)

83. SAINTS PAULINUS AND ITHAMAR, BISHOPS OF ROCHESTER

Our holy Father Paulinus was a Roman monk who was sent to England in 601 by St. Gregory the Great in order to help St. Augustine's mission. The Venerable Bede describes him as "a tall man with a slight stoop, with black hair, a thin face and narrow, aquiline nose. His presence was venerable and awe-inspiring."

On July 21, 625 he was consecrated bishop of York by St. Justus, archbishop of Canterbury, in order to serve the Christian Queen Ethelburga of Kent at the court of the still pagan King Edwin of Northumbria. In 626 the queen gave birth to a baby girl, Eanfled, and Paulinus baptized her with twelve other Northumbrians at Pentecost. Eanfled later became Abbess of Whitby, reposing on February 10, 704.

"On a certain Lord's Day," writes a monk of Whitby, Paulinus "is said to have given a very simple display of his discernment of God. When the aforesaid king, surrounded by those who were not only still heathen but not even bound by lawful marriage, hastened with Paulinus to the instruction room from the palace, where they had been exhorted to change from other practices to this, a certain screeching crow sang out words of dire calamity. The whole royal retinue who were in the street, hearing the bird, stopped and turned toward it in amazement, as if that 'new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God' were not to be, as it should, in the church, but, as it should not, 'not to profit [but to the subverting of the hearers' (II Tim. 2.14)]". Then, with God watching and foreseeing all from His ark, the honourable bishop said to one of his boys, 'Shoot an arrow carefully at the bird.' When this had quickly been done, he ordered the bird and the arrow to be saved and carried to the palace after he had completed the instruction of those to be catechized. After they had all assembled in the palace and the new and ignorant people of God had given him a sufficient opportunity, he explained how from so clear a sign they should learn that the ancient evil known as idolatry brought no good to anyone. For he said that that irrational bird sang of his own death, though he had known it not, whereas he could say nothing profitable for men reborn and baptized in the image of God who 'have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth'."

At Pascha (April 12) 627 Paulinus baptized King Edwin and a vast number of his people. And "from that time until the end of Edwin's reign," writes the Venerable Bede, "a period of six years, Paulinus continued to preach the word of God in that kingdom with the king's consent and favour; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed and were baptized. Indeed it is said that so great was the zeal for the faith and the desire for the saving grace of baptism among the Northumbrians that on one occasion Paulinus, when visiting the royal estate at Adgefrin [Old Yeavering] with the king and queen, spent thirty-six days with them there administering catechism and baptism. During all that time he did nothing

from morning till evening but give instruction in Christ's saving Word to the people who flocked there from every village and district; and after their instruction, he baptized them for the remission of their sins in the river Glen, which was nearby."

At Holystone, in Coquetdale in Northumbria, at "the Lady's Well", St. Paulinus baptized 3000 people in 627.

"These events," writes Bede, "happened in the kingdom of Bernicia. In the kingdom of Deira, where he very often stayed with the king, he used to baptize in the river Swale, which flows past the town of Cataracta [Catterick]; for the church there was in its infancy, and it had not yet been possible to build oratories or baptisteries."

With the deacon James, St. Paulinus moved further south. He preached at Lindsey, baptized in the Trent at Littleborough and at Southwell in Nottinghamshire, and built a beautiful stone church at Lincoln. There he consecrated St. Honorius, archbishop of Canterbury, in 628. He also persuaded King Earpwald of East Anglia to accept the Faith.

After the death of St. Edwin in battle in 633, Paulinus fled to Kent with Queen Ethelburga, her surviving children and an escort of thanes. There, being unable to return to his northern see, he acted as bishop of Rochester. There is a tradition that he visited Glastonbury and rebuilt the church of St. Mary, covering its roof with Mendip lead. It is very possible that he helped Queen Ethelburga to found her convent at Lyminge in Kent, where she reposed as abbess on September 8, 647. Paulinus himself reposed on October 10, 644.

In the place of St. Paulinus, Archbishop Honorius consecrated Ithamar, a Kentishman whom the Venerable Bede describes as "not inferior to his predecessors for learning and conduct of life". During his episcopate he consecrated the first Anglo-Saxon archbishop of Canterbury, Deusdedit. He died in about 660 and was buried at Rochester. In 1077, while Bishop Gundulf was carrying out extensive rebuilding, St. Ithamar's relics were translated to the accompaniment of miracles. Another translation was accomplished by Bishop John, who was cured of severe pain in the eyes through the prayers of St. Ithamar.

St. Paulinus is commemorated on October 10, and St. Ithamar on June 10. Their relics were translated into the new Norman cathedral at Rochester in 1080, where they remained until the Reformation.

Holy Fathers Paulinus and Ithamar, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*; A Monk of

Whitby, *Life of St. Gregory the Great*; Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition*, English Orthodox Trust, 1995, chapter 79; David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 206, 318-319; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 51-52, 351, 392-393)

84. SAINT PEGA, HERMITESS OF PEAKIRK

Our holy Mother Pega was the sister of the great hermit St. Guthlac and lived as a hermitess in Peakirk, Northamptonshire, not far from Guthlac's hermitage at Crowland. On Holy Wednesday, 714, Guthlac fell ill; but he was still well enough to celebrate the Divine Liturgy at Pascha and to preach to his fellow-struggler Beccel; which sermon, we read in Felix's *Life of Guthlac*, "moved him so very deeply… that he never before nor after heard the like.

"When the seventh day of his illness came, the aforesaid brother came to visit him about the sixth hour of the day. Then he found him leaning in the corner of his chapel against the altar. However, he could not speak with him for he saw that his illness troubled him very much; nevertheless, afterwards he begged that would leave his words with him before he died. Then the blessed Guthlac raised his tired limbs a little from the wall, and spoke to him thus: 'It is now very near the time, my son, so take heed of my last instructions. After my soul leaves the body, to then to my sister and say to here that I avoided her presence here on earth and would not see her, in order that afterwards we two might see each other again in heaven before the face of God. And bid her set my body in the coffin, and wrap me in the shroud that Ecgburh sent me. I would not be dressed in linen clothing while I lived, but now for the love of Christ's virgin I will put the gift she sent me to the use for which I kept it. When body and soul part, let them wrap the body in that garment, and lay it in the coffin.'

"When the aforesaid brother heard these things, then he spoke thus: 'Now that I see and understand your illness, and I realize that you must leave this world, I entreat you my dear father to tell me about something which I never dared to ask you before. Since the time that I first lived with you in this wilderness, I have heard you speak in the evening and in the morning – with whom I knew not. Where I beg and entreat you never to leave me troubled and anxious about this matter after your death.' Then the man of God drew the breath from his breast with a long gasp, answered him and said: 'My son, do not be troubled; the things which I would not tell to any man of the world before as long as I lived, I will now disclose and make known to you. From the second year I lived in this wilderness, in the evening and in the early morning God Himself has sent to me an angel for my consolation, who revealed to me the heavenly mysteries which it is permitted no man to tell, and quite relieved the hardness of my struggle with heavenly angelic conversation; who made known and revealed to me things absent as well as present. And now my son, beloved one, preserve my words and tell them to no other man save Pega my sister and Ecgberht the hermit, if it happen that you should speak with him.' Then when he had spoken these words he leaned his head against the wall, and drew the breath from his breast with a long gasp. When he recovered and got his breath back again, there came a fragrance from the mouth like the scent of the sweetest flowers. And on the following night, when the aforesaid brother fell to his

nightly prayers, he beheld all the house surrounded outside with a great brightness; and the brightness remained there till daylight.

"Then when it was morning, the man of God again stirred a little, and lifted up the tired limbs. Then he spoke to him thus: 'My son, prepare yourself to go on the journey which I commanded you; because it is now time that the spirit must leave the tired limbs and to unending bliss, to the Kingdom of heaven.' Then when he had said these things, he stretched his hand towards the altar and strengthened himself with the heavenly food, Christ's Body and His Blood. And after that he lifted his eyes to heaven, and stretched out his arms, and then with joy and bliss sent his spirit to the eternal bliss of the heavenly Kingdom. In the middle of these things, the aforesaid brother saw all the house suffused with heavenly light; and he saw there a fiery tower from the earth to the height of heaven, the brightness of which was unlike anything else; and because of its beauty, all the brightness of the sun itself as midday was turned to paleness. And he heard angelic songs throughout the regions of the air; and all the island was completely filled with a great fragrance of a wonderful scent.

"Then the aforesaid brother was immediately struck with great fear, and went into a boat and travelled to the place which the man of God had previously instructed, and then came to Pega and told her all those things, in order, as the brother had ordered him. Then, when she heard that her brother had died, she immediately fell on the earth, and was filled with great grief so that she could not say a word. Then, when she recovered herself, she drew a long sigh from within her breast, and gave thanks to the Almighty for His will. Then on the following day, according to the instruction of the blessed man, they came to the island and there they found all that place and the building filled with the fragrance of the herb ambrosia. Then for a period of three days she commended the holy man to God with holy hymns, and on the third day, as the man of God had instructed, they buried the body with honour in the chapel.

"The Divine goodness wished openly to display to men in how great a glory the blessed man was after he was buried; for formerly he shone and was resplendent with so many miracles before the eyes of men. So after his death, when he had been buried twelve months, God put it into the mind of the Lord's servant that she should remove her brother's body to another tomb. Then she gathered together there God's servants and priests and those in ecclesiastical orders, on the same day twelve months after the blessed man had died; and they opened the tomb. Whereupon they found the body as entirely sound as it formerly was, and as though he were still alive; and in the flexibility of the joints and in all things it was much more like a sleeping man than a dead one. Moreover the garments were as pristine as when they were first put round the body. When they who were assembled there saw these things they were very afraid because of what they saw there; and they were so struck with fear that they could say nothing. Then when

Christ's servant Pega saw that, she was immediately filled with spiritual bliss, and then with hymns in honour of Christ wrapped the holy body in another shroud which Ecgberht the hermit had previously sent him, when alive, for the same service...

"There was a certain head of a household of the aforesaid exile Aethelbald in the district of the Wisse, whose eyes had been covered with the white spot and with cloudiness for twelve months. Then when his doctors had for a long time treated him with salves, and this had brought about no cure, he was divinely admonished within that if they brought him to Guthlac's place, he should then recover his health and sight. His friends brought him to Crowland shortly after, and they spoke to Christ's servant Pega; and she heard of the man's firm and fixed faith. Whereupon she led him into the church where Guthlac's venerable body was, took some of the consecrated salt which Guthlac himself had previously consecrated, and moistened it and dropped it in the eye. And then, before she put another drop in the other eye, he could see with the other; and he easily saw what there was there; and he went home whole and sound."

Shortly after this, St. Pega went on a pilgrimage to Rome, where she reposed in about 719. Ordericus Vitalis claimed that her relics survived in an unnamed Roman church in his day, and that miracles took place there. However, it is claimed that her heart was carried back to England for veneration at the site of her hermitage. A 13th-century "heart stone" may mark the place where it was buried.

St. Pega is commemorated on January 8.

Holy Mother Pega, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Felix, *Life of St. Guthlac*; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 319; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 112-113)

85. SAINT PETROC, ABBOT OF PADSTOW

And those with him

Our holy Father Petroc (or Pedrog) was born in about 468, the third of ten children of King Glywys Cernvw of Glywysing (Dyfed, Wales). After the death of his father, the people wanted Petroc to take his place, but the saint wanted to devote himself to the religious life. So his brother Winleu (Gwynllyw) became king instead, becoming the father of St. Cadoc.

Accompanied by a band of followers, Petroc set off for Ireland, where he learned the monastic life from various teachers for about twenty years. Then he decided to return to Britain. Returning to the shore, he found the same ship in which he had sailed to Ireland, miraculously free from damage and dilapidation. "Regarding it as a good omen for the voyage they were about to begin, he boarded the ship with greater confidence than a practiced sailor, though untrained in navigation, and was followed by his band of disciples rejoicing. At the command of the servant of God they haul up the sails to the top of the mast, believing what they had learnt from their true Master – that all things would be possible to the saints. The sails spread, the ship was borne along by the fear of God with great rapidity, although the winds were adverse. To confirm the sense of miraculous intervention in the minds of the simple crew, the intervening space of ocean was crossed in a very short time, and the ship arrived at the same calm haven which they had desired." (St. Méen)

They landed at Trebetherick in St. Minver's parish, on the north bank of the River Camel in Cornwall. Now at that time St. Samson [the first bishop of Dol in Brittany], was living in solitude by the sea-shore. Lifting his eyes towards the sea, he was astonished to see with what extraordinary speed Petroc's boat was advancing over the water, and he prayed to God to humble those who were sailing in such an unusual way, "lest they should be puffed up. Then a certain man, acting as under-pilot, travelling along the sand and incautiously slipping, was drowned in the channel. The name of the under-pilot who died was Reu…" (Gotha MS)

Petroc and his disciples were saddened by this event. But they landed, and seeing some reapers in the field, Petroc went up to them, courteously saluted them and asked them how they were and of what religion they were. The reapers answered rudely, scoffing at what seemed to them to be their ridiculous monastic attire. And they said – perhaps to test the strangers' sanctity – that they were tired and thirsty and would be glad if a fountain of fresh water would spring out of the rock so that they could quench their thirst. Petroc immediately prayed, struck a rock with his staff, and a fountain of salubrious water sprung up before their eyes… The reapers were astonished by the miracle and gave thanks to God. Then Petroc asked them whether they knew of any religious man in the area. They told him about St. Samson's holy life, all-night prayers and extreme fasting. Delighted by this news, St. Petroc set off in the direction of St. Samson's cell, earnestly praying

that Samson would not depart from that place before he had had a chance to speak to him.

"Immediately Samson's limbs became stiff as stone. In vain did he attempt to put his hands to the instrument with which he was turning the soil. Thus had he been bound by the prayer of the man of God. Meanwhile the holy Petroc had reached him, and at the voice of his salutation Samson was freed from that stone-like rigidity, and, after they had exchanged the kiss of peace, he gave glory to God for the virtue and holiness which he had revealed by so great a miracle.

"After the servant of God had had a short conference with Samson, receiving permission to depart, he turned his steps towards the cell of Bishop Wethnoc, which Samson had pointed out to him. Wethnoc received him courteously, and entertained both him and his companions honourably in the true spirit of hospitality. Next morning the servant of God resolved to make a permanent stay in that place, and approaching Wethnoc he earnestly desires leave to live with him. The bishop gladly agreed, and promised of his own accord to make over the cell to him altogether, because he was confident that Petroc was the very man whom an ancient prophecy current in the neighbourhood had foretold was to come from Ireland and to magnify the name of the Lord Jesus Christ far and near by the merits of the highest sanctity. He asked however, and obtained, that that place in memory of him should be called by his name. Wherefore in the language of that nation it is called Llanduwethinich [Lawethinoc, "the cemetery of Wethinoc", now Padstow, "Petroc's place"]. Bishop Wethnoc therefore with his men departed, rejoicing that he had been worthy to prepare a place of habitation for the man of God, and blessed Petroc entered the cell with his disciples, and there for full thirty years he lived, and led so innocent a life that he did to none what he would not should be done to himself, and so afflicted his body with vigils and endurance of cold that, to repress the unlawful motions of concupiscence, he often plunged himself into the middle of a torrent, and stood there naked from cockcrow till dawn…" (St. Méen)

"And to guard against the possibility of disagreement with his neighbours arising from disputed boundaries, he surrounded the limits of his lands with very long ditches, dug deep like valleys, the ruins of which remain to this day, thus occupying his monks with bodily labours and warding off the danger of idleness. Also, in the place which is at Nant Funttum, that is, the Valley of the Fountain, he constructed an oratory, and a mill close by, at vast cost and by daily labours. And because the place where the work was being carried on was at some distance from the monastery, to occupy himself during his journeys to and fro he is said to have carried on his shoulders each morning and evening a stone of great size, in memory of which the same stone is place and placed on his tomb, and to this day scrapings from the same stone, mixed with water, confer prompt remedy on the faithful who are sick." (Gotha MS)

At length the saint decided to go on pilgrimage to Rome. After venerating the holy places, he and his disciples returned home, and were at Newton on the border of Cornwall [Newton St. Pettock in North Devon] when a great storm of wind and rain assailed them, rendering the roads impassable. His disciples began to grumble about this. But "the servant of God checked their murmuring, promising the next day it would be fine, and they would have a prosperous journey. But when the next day arrived, the storm did not cease. Which when the servant of God saw, he began to be sorrowful, and to accuse himself of presumption because he had promised what God's Providence had not ordained. When the tempest ceased on the third day, and his companions wished to proceed on their journey, he announced that he was going on a pilgrimage to Rome, because he had been rash with his tongue and prophesied falsely, and not in accordance with what God had disposed. They consented, albeit with regret, and after exchanging the kiss of charity they separated with tears, and so they returned to Cornwall and he set out for Rome." (St. Méen)

While he was in Italy, Petroc visited the shrine of the holy Archangel Michael in Monte Gargano, and then went on to Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre. At length, after much travelling, the saint returned home to Cornwall.

"There reigned at that time Teudur, a cruel and fierce man who, to punish thieves and criminals, had with savage cruelty caused various serpents and all kinds of noxious worms to be collected in a marshy lake. At his death, his son, who succeeded him in the kingdom by hereditary right, forbade this kind of torment to be inflicted upon men, and the hungry reptiles turned and destroyed one another by frequent attacks with livid tooth, so that out of so great a number only one remained – a horrible monster of enormous size who tore to pieces cattle and men in fearful fashion with his savage jaws." On hearing of this peril, St. Petroc approached the monster together with Bishop Wethnoc, and, binding him with his stole, led him towards the sea. But then "the man of God met a party of 300 men carrying, amid loud lamentations, the lifeless body of a prince's son, to fulfil the rites of burial according to the custom of the country. They were terrified at the sight of this most hideous monster, and some fell prostrate on the ground like dead men; others, trembling as they stood, were hardly able to carry the bier, so overwhelmed were they with sudden horror and anguish at the sight of the reptile. The servant of God, therefore, taking pity on the mourners, kneeled and prayed, and having implored the clemency of the Almighty restored to all their strength and raised to life again the young man whom they had been bearing as a corpse. Then, while they were rejoicing in the praises of God, the saint commanded the monster which had bound to hurt no one any more and to depart to solitudes beyond the seas…" (St. Méen)

Now Petroc, feeling the infirmities of old age since his return from his long

pilgrimage, and wishing to withdraw from the cares and disputes of the monastery, "took with him two brethren, Peter and Dator, and secretly departed to Nanceventon [Little Petherick], and there lived in retirement fifteen days. Then fearing that his brethren might be concerned about his unexplained absence, he determined to see them again and afterwards to return to his retreat when the affairs [of the monastery] had been duly settled, with the consent of his brethren, after the matter had been discussed with them. He summons the brethren, and informs them that he is no longer equal to the task of managing business matters and that he wishes to live a retired life with a few chosen [monks]. He bids them elect an administrator, fit to undertake the burden of ruling the church, whom he may place in his own seat [cathedra] instead of himself; who must be a worthy pastor of souls, and an energetic man of affairs, fearing God and blameless. Now there was there a certain man, well instructed, named Peter, recently professed, but esteemed by his brethren as a man of holy life, and 'having a good report of them which are without'. After prayer, he was unanimously elected, and Petroc transferred to him the pastoral charge. Then, taking twelve brethren, after exchanging the kiss of peace, he departed, and they made lodging-places for themselves an Nanceventon in different cells. He himself had a cell constructed of logs, and likewise some of the brethren, but many withdrew to caves in the hills or hollow places in the valleys. They met together for solemn prayers and for meals. But they suffered from lack of water, which had to be brought with considerable trouble from a long distance, for the water of the river could not be drunk, as it was mixed with salt water coming up from the sea. So the venerable old man, after singing the Praises as usual, full of faith struck his staff into the ground on the right-hand side of the cell, and repeated the miracle [of Trebetherick], causing a well of purest water, sweet to the taste, to spring forth." (Gotha MS)

"On a certain day when the servant of God was praying alone in a place where he had been accustomed to pray, he saw a stag appear in the distance, fleeing towards him as hard as he could go, pursued by the huntsmen of Constantine, a rich man, with hallooing and barking of dogs. The servant of God, moved with kindly feeling, protected it from being hurt. The stag was being followed by the chieftain himself, to whom his soldiers, fearing to touch it while under the protection of the man of God, reported the matter in due order. Full of fury, Constantine would have struck the servant of God with his sword, but was suddenly smitten with paralysis, and became unable to move hand or foot, until he besought pardon and (at the petition of his soldiers) the saint released him by his pious prayers. After freeing him, he taught him and his nineteen [or twenty-four (Gotha MS)] soldiers the Christian Faith, and made them gentle and kind instead of fierce tyrants, and worshippers of Christ instead of pagans.

"One day, while the servant of God was at his meal, a jar of water which had been placed there was knocked over by accident, and the liquor was spilt. But Petroc, making the sign of the cross, took up the vessel immediately, full of

heavenly nectar, which he tasted and handed to his brethren, who wondered at its sweetness.

"The saint was watching in prayer out of doors on a Sunday, when the rain fell in abundance all round him, but fell not upon him.

"The servant of God and Bishop Wethnoc were [one day] alone, conversing together sweetly of heavenly things, when lo! A mantle of wondrous beauty descended [from heaven] between them. And when, 'in honour preferring one another', each offered it to the other, and with pious contention heaped up reasons why the other should have it, straightway in their sight it was taken up into heaven. And immediately two were sent from heaven – one for each.

"After they had spent several years in the aforesaid cell in holy life and conversation, the servant of God was directed by an angel to betake himself to some still more remote part of the wilderness, and found Vuron [or Goran], a most holy hermit, who, while winning his daily bread by the labour of his hands, never let his spirit cease from prayer. He asked and obtained from him the grace of hospitality, and they entered together into [Vuron's] solitary habitation, and found there bread and a white table placed for them there by God's command. Refreshed by the wonderful sweetness of this meal they gave thanks to the divine goodness, and continued their sober colloquies; and then [after a revelation from God] Vuron departed to seek a new abode for himself [at Gorran, fifteen miles to the south]. Meanwhile the anxious disciples had been seeking for Petroc through the wilderness, and when they had found him, they hailed him, and besought him to return, in spite of his desire to hide his sanctity [in the wilderness]…" (St. Méen)

In the place where the hermit Vuron had lived, which is now Bodmin ("the abode of the monks"), the saint built a monastery.

"Cynam [Cynan or Conon], a tribune in the country, was racked with agonizing pain; Petroc appeared to him by night as he slept and commanded him to set free the accused persons he was keeping in prison, [promising him] that if he would release them he would recover his health. On awaking, he related the vision to his wife, by whose counsel he loosed the prisoners from their chains, and felt himself completely recovered.

"A certain woman also, who had suffered an issue of blood for several years, secretly touched the garment of the holy man and recovered her health as a reward of her faith.

"But that the virtue of the saint should be known even to 'beasts that are not clean', a great dragon living near his cell in the wilderness, having got a piece of wood into his right eye, laying aside all wish to hurt, hastened to the temple where

the saint was engaged in prayer, and reclining his head on the outer threshold lay there for three days, waiting for a miracle from God. By Petroc's command he was sprinkled with water mingled with dust from the pavement [or the foot of the altar (Gotha MS)], and straightway the wood removed by means of the [saint's] prescription, and his sight restored, wonderful to relate! he returned to his accustomed wallowing place.

"A woman, feeling thirsty one night, drank water out of a jug and swallowed a small serpent, [in consequence of which] she was for many years in bad health. As no physicians benefited her, she was brought to the holy man. He made a mixture of water and earth which he gave to the sick woman to drink, and immediately she had swallowed it she vomited a serpent three feet long, but dead, and the same hour she recovered her health and gave thanks to God." (St. Méen)

"After several years had passed, his body being worn out, partly by the exercises of the contemplative life, and partly by age,.. he wished to visit each of the places where the brethren abode, to confirm them and to bid them a last farewell, and on his journey he began to find his strength suddenly fail him. And having greeted his monks at Nanceventon, he desired, before the rapid progress of his disease made it too late, to push on and visit the brethren of Lanwethinoc, and entered the house of a certain father of a family named Rovel, from whom that *rus* is to this day called Trerovel, that is, the Villa of Rovel, and his growing weakness made it impossible for him to proceed further. Now the father of the family, having great compassion on him, accomodated him in a private chamber in which he might repose, taking great care of him. And as his languor hourly increased, he [Petroc] invited his special friends, united to him by spiritual ties, to recommend [to God] his departure in their prayers. Finally his agony approached, and, having received the great viaticum of our redemption, on June 4 [in the year 564], about the fourth watch of the night, freed from the prison of the body, he shone forth like a star in that said chamber…

"When therefore the death of this great patron is made public, the whole population of the province comes together, he is borne forth by an immense crowd of mourners… and is solemnly buried in the place which he had made glorious by the first fruits of his conversation [as a monk in Cornwall]. Close to his tomb a living fountain springs up, which cures sore eyes and internal complaints, if there be faith in the person seeking healing…" (Gotha MS)

St. Petroc is commemorated on June 7 and October 1, and his fellow-struggler, St. Wethnoc – on November 7 in Cornwall, and on November 11 in Brittany (where he is known as St. Guenoc). St. Vuron (Goran) is commemorated on April 7.

In the early tenth century King Athelstan of England gave to Exeter, among other relics of Breton saints he had received from grateful Breton friends, relics "of

the body of S. Withenoc the Bishop".

Some time after the middle of the ninth century Bodmin became the major centre for St. Petroc's veneration and his relics were moved there from Padstow. The Bodmin monastery soon became one of the wealthiest Cornish churches. In 963 King Edgar ordered a shrine to be built for the relics of the saint. It was "to be honourably gilded with gold and silver, in honour of S. Petroc the confessor of Christ, where his relics are kept, that by his merits I may obtain length of days both in this life and in that which is to come". However, in 981 Bodmin was sacked by Viking pirates, and in about 1000 his relics were removed elsewhere for safe-keeping. In 1177, a Breton stole his relics and gave them to the Abbey of St Méen in Brittany, where his first life was written on the basis of older documents. (The other life, in the Gotha MS, is also twelfth century.) However, Henry II restored them to Bodmin (leaving one rib at St. Méen), and the head-reliquary, an ivory casket of Sicilian workmanship that used to hold them is still on public display in the church of St. Petroc at Bodmin. The holy relics were cast out during the English Reformation. Five churches are dedicated to St. Petroc in Cornwall, about the same number in Wales, in Devon – seventeen, and some also in Brittany.

St. Petroc is commemorated on June 4.

Holy Father Petroc, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Gilbert H. Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, part 4, Truro, 1985, pp. 132-166; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 351-352; http://www.earlybritishkingdoms.com/bios/pedrogg.html; http://www.frpeterpreble.com/2011/06/6-june-st-petroc-abbot-of-padstow.html; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places*, Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 155-156, 174)

86. SAINT RUMWOLD, INFANT OF BUCKINGHAM

The holy infant Rumwold was the grandson of the famous pagan King Penda of Mercia, who killed the first two Christian kings of Northumbria, Saints Edwin and Oswald. His parents were probably King Alfrid and Queen Kyneburga, a daughter of King Penda. She may have been one of the converts of St. Cedd, bishop of the East Saxons; later she founded a monastery in Castor, Cambridgeshire, and was counted among the saints.

Now when St. Kyneburga was given in marriage to King Alfrid, who was a pagan, she sighed deeply and prayed God that she would not be joined to a pagan, but that her husband would be converted to the Truth Faith. And in the marriage chamber she told her husband that she would not sleep with him until he renounced his idols and was baptized. By the Providence of God, he accepted her words, and was baptized, after which they were joined in the Christian rite of marriage.

So it came to pass that she conceived a son… In 662, as the time for giving birth drew near, King Penda invited his daughter and her husband to visit him. On the way, at what is now King's Sutton in Northamptonshire, the pangs of childbirth came upon Kyneburga, and when the soldiers had set up a tent in a field, she gave birth to a son. But then an extraordinary miracle took place, which has parallels in the lives of some Eastern saints, such as the Martyrs Cyricus and his mother Julitta, and St. Sergius of Radonezh. The infant immediately cried out in a loud voice: "I am a Christian" three times. At this two priests named Widerin and Edwold said: "Thanks be to God". And then the infant said: "I worship, confess and adore the God Who is three and one, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." At this the priests and bystanders marvelled and began to chant: "We praise Thee, O God." Then the child asked that he be made a catechumen (one preparing for baptism) by the priest Widerin, and be held for the signing of the Faith by the priest Edwold, and be given the name Rumwold.

After the signing, the parents said to each other: "Let us send to the neighbouring kings and princes, that they receive our dearest son from the sacred font of Baptism." When St. Rumwold heard this, he summoned his parents and said to them: "It is not fitting that I, a servant of God, should be received from the regeneration of Holy Baptism in the hands of the proud and rich of this world, but the example of God should be imitated, Who was humbled for our sake to the taking on of human flesh, and was conceived by the Holy Spirit from the life-giving womb of the Virgin, and did not wish to be baptized in the flowing waters of the Jordan by the mighty of this fleeting age, but by the forerunner of His Nativity, who lived in the desert clothed in camel's hair, whose food was wild honey and locusts, and was made poor among men, though he was worthy to be venerated as the prophet, forerunner and baptist. For he was announced by an angel, was born

of a priestly father, and deservedly baptized the Holy of Holies and King of all the ages and eternal Priest, Who give to all who believe in Him the Baptism of salvation to the remission of all sins, since in Him there was no stain of sin. I ask, therefore, that I be baptized by the priest Widerin and received by Edwold; for it is in their hands that I desire to be made a Christian through the virtue and mystery of God."

When he had said this, Rumwold pointed out a hollow stone which lay not far away in a certain hut in a low-lying valley, and ordered the servants who were standing by to bring it with all haste so that he could be baptized in it. But they were unable to move the stone from the earth by any means. When they told this to the king, he ordered them to fetch a wooden vessel in which to baptize the recruit of Christ. But when Rumwold saw them going and bringing back a wooden vessel full of water, he said to the priests Widerin and Edwold: "You go alone in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Holy Trinity, and without doubting take up the stone, and trusting in the supreme Creator of all bring it here." Immediately they went, easily lifted the stone (which was very heavy) from the earth, and placed it in front of Rumwold. The ancient font which can be seen next to the entrance of King's Sutton church today may be the font in which St. Rumwold was baptized.

When he had been baptized, he ordered the Divine Liturgy to be celebrated, so that he might be given the Body and Blood of Christ.

After the Liturgy, the holy infant gave a sermon which amazed all those present. Then he said: "Behold, I go the way of all flesh; for it is not right that I should live in this mortal body after the hour of my birth. But after my departure I wish to remain in the place where I was born the space of one year. After that I should be taken to Brackley for two years. And after three years I propose that my bones should rest in the place which will at some time be called Buckingham for all time." The names of these places were not known at that time, but afterwards came to be known.

And so on the third day St. Rumwold gave up his spirit to God, on the third of November. And, as he had commanded, he was buried in that same place. Then after the death of the priest Edwold, he was translated to Brackley by the priest Widerin. And after three years he was translated to Buckingham, where many miracles were wrought for those who sought his prayers. The blind were given their sight, the lame walked, and many diseases were cured.

St. Rumwold was commemorated on many Anglo-Saxon calendars, including that of Canterbury which was compiled by St. Dunstan. But his cult died out after the Norman Conquest of 1066, being preserved only in some church dedications. In Camden's time he was still invoked by the fishermen of Folkestone as their patron. The saint's popularity, according to Farmer's *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, "was unexpectedly persistent".

St. Rumwold is commemorated on November 2 or 3.

Holy Infant Rumwold, pray to God for us!

(Sources: *Nova Legenda Anglie*, II, 345-50; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 350; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 14, 292)

87. SAINTS SIDWELL AND JUTHWARA, VIRGIN-MARTYRS OF EXETER

These martyrs were sisters in the flesh, and since their lives are very similar it is sometimes thought that they are one and the same person. However, the balance of evidence appears to support the traditional belief that they were distinct persons.

St. Sidwell (Sativola) was born at Exeter, and was killed by her stepmother, who incited the reapers in the fields to behead her with a scythe and throw her head into a well. She was buried outside the east gate of the city (the church dedicated to her still survives), and many miracles of healing took place through her intercession during Orthodox times. There is a holy well next to her church.

St. Juthwara (Aude) was the sister of St. Sidwell, St. Wulvela of Cornwall and St. Paul Aurelian, bishop of Leon of Britanny. She may be the same person as St. Julitta or Juliot of Camelford in Cornwall. She was a pious virgin devoted to prayer, fasting and almsgiving. After her father's death she grew pale as wax, and when her stepmother asked her the cause, she replied that she was suffering from a pain in her chest. Her stepmother recommended that she apply two cheeses to her breasts to ease the pain. Then she told her son Bana that Juthwara was pregnant, adding as proof that if he felt the space between her breasts it would be damp from milk coming from her breasts. He accused her, found that the space between her breasts was damp, flew into a rage and cut off her head with his sword.

According to the Breton version of the story, Juthwara had stuffed her bosom with milk-curds to give to the poor, and when she was beheaded she took up her head, walked to the hall, put her head on again, reproached her brother, and immediately died. Then the brother, whose name was Gurguy, went to his brother, St. Paul, at Leon, and was told by him to do penance by retiring into the forest near Landerneau, and there fast and pray for forty days. The penance accomplished, Gurguy returned to St. Paul, who admitted him as a monk to his monastery, and finally sent him to be superior of a cell he had established at Gerber, afterwards called Le Relecqu, and changed his name to Tanguy. We know that St. Paul established a monastery at Gerber in about 560.

A fountain and an oak sprang up at the place of her martyrdom. After many years the tree was overthrown by a gale, and fell against a house that was near, so that the branches prevented people going in and out. The owner of the house and his boy set to work to hack the boughs away, when the stump, relieved of the burden, righted itself, and carried up the boy who was clinging to an uncut branch.

In about the year 1050, Bishop Aelfwold of Sherborne, in response to many signs and revelations, translated the relics of St. Juthwara from Halstock to Sherborne,

where they were placed next to those of St. Wulsin, bishop of Sherborne, which were translated at the same time. There, through the intercession of the two saints, many miracles took place.

One of the brothers of the monastery had been violently shaken for nearly half a year by bouts of fever, which came, first every two days, and then daily. He hated all food, and had to be dragged to meals as if to torture. On the day of the solemn translation of the relics of St. Juthwara, he wanted to sing in the choir behind the procession, but was suddenly seized with trembling and pallor. Reluctantly, he began to move back as if to captivity. But the other brothers, mindful of the grace of the saints, gave him to drink from the water which had washed their bones. He was completely healed. Others suffering from fevers were also healed by drinking the holy water.

A married woman lay as if dead for three days. She was deaf and dumb, immobile as a stone, her eyes staring blankly in front of her, pupils and eyelids motionless. She gave no sign to those who called to her, and if carried her head and other limbs would fall if not supported. Everyone was expecting her death, and the only talk was of her burial. On the third day her son, who was a monk brought up in the piety of the saints, came to see his parents, wishing to comfort the one and cure the other. But human wisdom saw no hope of a cure. Mindful, however, of the virtues of his native saints, he returned to the monastery and sent her some of the above-mentioned water. Immediately some of it was poured down her throat, she came to as if from sleep, moved her eyes, sat up, and eagerly drank the rest of the draught. Soon she was on her feet. Then all their friends who had been mourning the woman without hope rejoiced with her husband as if she had come back from the dead.

There was a well-known priest named Wulfric, who had been taught and ordained by Bishop Aelfwold. A serious illness brought him to receive the sacrament of Holy Unction, when, mindful of the virtues of the Virgin-Martyr Juthwara, he sent a boy to Sherborne, saying:

"Ask the brethren to dip the relics of St. Juthwara, who was translated thither by Bishop Aelfwold, into some water, and to send it to me to drink. For I believe that I shall receive life and my former health through it."

The messenger went and came back with the water. When Wulfric drank, he was immediately cured.

St. Sidwell is commemorated on August 1. St. Juthwara is commemorated on November 28, and her translation feast on July 13.

Holy Virgin-Martyrs Sidwell and Juthwara, pray to God for us!

(Sources: S. Baring-Gould and J. Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints*, 1907-13, volume 1, pp. 185-188, vol. 4, pp. 174-176; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 230, 356-357; C.H. Talbot, "The Life of St. Wulsin of Sherborne by Goscelin", *Revue Benedictine*, lxix (1959), 82-85; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 158-159, 218)

88. SAINTS SIGEBERT AND SEBBI, KINGS AND MONKS OF EAST ANGLIA

Our holy Father Sigebert was exiled to France because of the hostility of King Redwald, the first Christian kind of East Anglia, who later apostasized, and was baptized there. Sigebert's brother Earpwald then succeeded to the throne of East Anglia, and after his death Sigebert returned home and became king. One of his first projects was to found a school for the education of boys in the study of letters. In this project he was assisted by Bishop Felix, who had come to him from Kent and provided him with teachers and masters according to the practice of Canterbury.

Sigebert also gave land to the Irish Saint Fursey to found a monastery in a former Roman fort in Burgh Cast. And he was so impressed by Fursey that he abandoned the throne of the East Angles to his relative Egric and become a monk.

"King Sigebert," according to the Venerable Bede, "became so ardent in his love for the Kingdom of heaven that he abandoned the affairs of his earthly kingdom, and entrusted them to his kinsman Egric, who had already governed part of the kingdom. He then entered a monastery that he had founded and, after receiving the tonsure, devoted his energies to winning an everlasting kingdom. A considerable while later, the Mercians led by King Penda attacked the East Angles who, finding themselves less experienced in warfare than their enemies, asked Sigebert to go into battle with them and foster the morale of the fighting men. When he refused, they dragged him out of his monastery regardless of his protests, and took him into battle with them in the hope that their men would be less likely to panic or think of flight if they were under the eye of one who had once been a gallant and distinguished commander. But, mindful of his monastic vows, Sigebert, surrounded by a well-armed host, refused to carry anything more than a stick, and when the heathen charged, both he and King Egric were killed and the army scattered." However, when, in 636, the pagan King Penda invaded the land, the people demanded that Sigebert come out of his monastery and lead the resistance. This took place in about 635.

Some years later, the southern part of the kingdom (Essex, together with Hertfordshire and London) came under King Wulfere of Mercia, and after a plague King Sighere and many of the people apostasized from the faith. However, Sebbi his fellow-king remained faithful. Then, in 665, King Wulfere sent Bishop Jaruman, who brought back both king and people to the path of righteousness.

Then King Sebbi, according to the Venerable Bede, "devoted himself to

religious exercises, frequent prayer, and acts of mercy, and he preferred a retired, monastic life to all the riches and honours of a kingdom. In fact, had not his wife absolutely refused to be separated from him, he would long before have abdicated and entered a monastery. For this reason many people thought and often said that a man of such disposition should have been a bishop rather than a king. When this soldier of the Heavenly Kingdom had ruled his earthly kingdom for thirty years [in 694], he was attacked by a serious disease that was to cause his death. He therefore urged his wife that, since they could no longer enjoy or serve the world, they should both devote themselves to the service of God. Having obtained her reluctant consent, the king went to Waldhere, bishop of London, successor to [Saint] Erkenwald, and with his blessing received the monastic habit that he had so long desired. He brought the bishop a considerable sum of money to be distributed among the poor, and kept nothing at all for himself, wishing to be poor in spirit for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven.

"As his malady gained ground and he felt the day of his death approaching, Sebbi, who was a man of kingly spirit, became apprehensive that the sufferings of a painful death might wring from him some word or gesture unbecoming to his dignity. He therefore summoned the bishop of London, in which city he was living, and asked that none but the bishop himself and two attendants might be present at his death. The bishop readily promised that, and not long afterwards this godly man saw in his sleep a comforting vision, which removed his anxiety on this score, and also revealed to him on what day he was to depart this life. As he subsequently related, he saw three men in bright robes come to him, one of whom sat down in front of his pallet while his companions remained standing and enquired about the condition of the sick man they had come to visit. The first man replied that his soul would leave his body without pain in a splendour of light, and that he would die in three days' time. Both of these things happened as he had learned in the vision; for on the third day, at the Ninth Hour, he seemed suddenly to fall into a light sleep and breathed out his spirit without any feeling of pain.

"A stone sarcophagus had been made ready for the burial; but when they came to lay his body in it, they found it a hand's breadth too long for the sarcophagus. So they chiselled out sufficient stone to add a further two fingers in length to it; but it still proved too short to receive the body. In this quandary, they wondered whether to look for another coffin, or whether, if possible, to shorten the body by bending the knees until it filled the sarcophagus. But an amazing thing happened, undoubtedly caused by Providence, that rendered both these alternatives unnecessary; for in the presence of the bishop and of Sighard, son of the monk-king – who succeeded him jointly with his brother Swefred – and a considerable number of men, the sarcophagus was suddenly found to be the correct length for the body, so much so that a pillow could be

placed at the head, while the feet rested four fingers short of the end of the sarcophagus. Sebbi was buried in the church of the blessed Apostles of the Gentiles [St. Paul's in London], through whose teachings he had learned to aspire to heavenly things."

Holy Fathers Sigebert and Sebbi, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, III, 19, 30, IV, 11; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 353; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, p. 56)

89. SAINT SIGFRID, BISHOP OF VAXJO

and those with him

Our holy Father Sigfrid was a monk of Glastonbury. According to another source, he came from York. In 994, when King Olaf Tryggvason of Norway was converted to the Faith of Christ, King Aethelred and his counsellors decided to send Sigrid and two other missionary bishops and some priests to accompany King Olaf to his homeland and help him in the conversion of his people.

On arriving in Norway, St. Sigfrid wanted to visit Raud the Sorcerer, who was living on the island of Godo in Slaten Fjord; but was prevented by bad weather caused by Raud's sorceries. So Sigfrid, according to Olaf Tryggvason's *Saga*, took all his liturgical vestments and went forward to the prow of the king's ship. He ordered tapers to be lit and incense to be brought out. Then he placed a cross on the stern of the vessel, read the Gospel and many prayers and sprinkled the whole ship with holy water. Then he ordered the sail to be stowed away, and to row into the fjord. The king ordered all the other ships to follow him. Then they went into the fjord without encountering any wind resistance. The water curled round the keel as if in a calm. And yet on each side the waves rose up so high that they hid the sight of the mountains.

St. Sigfrid continued his missionary activity when Olaf the Saint became king of Norway in 1016, both having been expelled from the court of King Canute of Denmark and England because of the latter's jealousy towards Olaf.

Some time later, King Olaf of Sweden sent to the king of England for missionaries to enlighten his people. St. Sigfrid came, and after settling in Vaxjo began by evangelizing the surrounding district. Then, in response to an angelic vision, he built a church in Vaxjo. At about the same time, another Englishman, Gotebald, was sent to labour in Skane (he was commemorated at Lund on August 21). These were the first missionary bishops on Swedish soil.

The mission to Sweden began to bear fruit. Twelve wise and aged men were chosen to represent the twelve chief tribes of the land, who were to decide about the truth of Sigfrid's teaching. After listening to his teaching, they were converted and agreed to be baptized in twelve days' time. Eleven of them returned and were baptized, while the twelfth died in the meantime. The conversion of these leaders led to the conversion of a large number of people in Varend.

Hearing of these events, King Olaf sent one of his trusted councillors to find out what was happening. The councillor reported that during the Divine Liturgy, after the bishop had elevated the bread and the people had fallen on their knees, the bread changed into a young Boy, Whom the bishop kissed, and who then disappeared while the bread remained on the paten. When the king heard this, he knew who the bishop was and invited him to come to him at Husaby in East Gothland.

The bishop did not hurry on his journey, but stopped at Utvangstorp to teach and baptized the people. On arriving in Husaby, he was received with great honour, and soon the king, his family and his court were baptized in the well at Husaby. Later, Sigfrid consecrated two more bishops for East and West Gothland.

Soon holy martyrdoms were strengthening the faith in Sweden. These included the three nephews of St. Sigfrid - **the priest Unaman, the deacon Sunaman and the sub-deacon Vinaman**. Once, when St. Sigfrid had been called to see the king, twelve men burst into their home and killed them, cutting off their heads. Then they threw the heads into a river which flowed next to the church and hid the bodies in a remote place.

A little later, Sigfrid returned, and during the night fervently prayed to God to reveal to him where the martyrs were buried. Then he saw three star-like lights twinkling above the middle of the lake and moving towards the eastern bank. He swam to the bank, and found the three heads in a vase with a heavy stone on top of them. Clutching them to his breast, he tearfully cried:

"May God avenge this crime!"

Then the first head replied:

"It will be avenged."

And the second head said:

"How?"

And the third head replied:

"In the third generation."

King Olaf arrived in Varend with an army and imposed heavy fines on the people for the murder of Sigfrid's nephews. Then he offered a considerable sum to the bishop himself. However, Sigfrid asked that the instead of the money some landed property should be given, as a result of which the king made over to him the estates of Hof and Tjuby. King Olaf died in 1022.

In 1028, an Englishman named **Ulfrid** came to Uppsala. He converted many to the Christian Faith, and proceeded to anathematize a popular idol named Thor which stood in the Thing of the pagans. At the same time, he seized a battle-axe and broke the image to pieces. Immediately he was hacked down and received the crown of martyrdom.

Other English bishops came to help Sigfrid in Sweden. Thus one by the name of

Bernard was made bishop of Skane by order of King Canute, after he had supervised the preparation and putting into practice of a Christian code of laws in Iceland.

Shortly before his death, it is related of St. Sigfrid that he became somewhat forgetful. Once he ordered a bath to be prepared for him on a fast day. A voice reproved him for doing this, whereupon he left the bath and confessed his fault.

On February 15, according to an old runic calendar, St. Sigfrid reposed in Vaxjo, where he had built a wooden church on the site of the present stone cathedral. A shrine to the saint, which has now disappeared, was situated in the centre of the church. Sigfrid died, according to one source in 1045, according to another - between 1060 and 1070.

His work in Sweden was continued by his disciples, **Bishops David and Eskil**. David was a great ascetic, and during prayer was seen enveloped in a flame of fire. Eskil, who was a relative of Sigfrid's and had been his chaplain, worked mainly in Sodermanland, and was consecrated bishop at Strangnas. After a violent storm had destroyed a pagan altar and its sacrifices, Bishop Eskil was stoned to death in about the year 1080.

St. Sigfrid is commemorated on February 15.

Holy Father Sigfrid, pray to God for us!

(Sources: *Heimskringla*, 87; Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, II, lxii, 60; "Trois Legendes de Saint Sigfrid", *Analecta Bollandiana*, 1942, LX, pp. 89-90; C.J.A. Oppermann, *The English Missionaries in Sweden and Finland*, London: SPCK, 1937; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 357, 385-386; C.F. Willstedt, "Vaxjo Cathedral")

90. SAINT SWITHUN, BISHOP OF WINCHESTER

Our holy Father Swithun (or Swithin) was born in Wessex early in the ninth century and educated at the Old Minster in Winchester. During the reign of King Egbert of Wessex (802-839) he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Helmstan of Winchester (838-c.852). He was chosen by King Egbert to be his chaplain, and to be the educator of his son Ethelwulf, who became king in 839. On October 30, 852 he was consecrated Bishop of Winchester by Archbishop Ceolnoth of Canterbury.

In 853 King Ethelwulf sent his five-year-old son Alfred, the future founder of the All-English monarchy, on a pilgrimage to Rome. He was escorted by St. Swithun. Pope Leo IV endowed the young prince with the insignia and dignity of a Roman consul. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* he even "consecrated Alfred as king and stood sponsor for him at confirmation, just as his father Ethelwulf had requested when he sent him thither."

In 854 King Ethelwulf "determined to give a tenth part of the lands throughout all my kingdom to Holy Church", including monks and nuns who would say prayers and serve liturgies for him. "It was determined by Ealhstan, bishop of Sherborne, and by Swithun, bishop of Winchester, together with all those serving God, that every week, on Saturday, the entire congregation of God's religious, both men and women, should chant fifty psalms, and each priest should celebrate two liturgies, one for King Ethelwulf and the other for the bishops and local officials." This charter was signed, after the king, by St. Swithun. His signature is also on other royal gifts of land to the Church. William of Malmesbury says that, if Bishop Ealstan of Sherborne was Ethelwulf's minister for temporal matters, Saint Swithun was the minister for spiritual matters.

In 859 St. Swithun built a bridge over the river Itchen in Winchester. A tenth-century poem survives commemorating the event: "You wayfarer, whoever gaze upon this gate, pour forth your devout prayers to the high-throned God on behalf of Christ's servant, Swithun, formerly the bishop. Through his infinite care and concern the delightful structure of the bridge was built to the glory of Christ and the embellishment of the town of Winchester, when the sun had duly passed through eight hundred and fifty-nine years after Christ in His mercy had become incarnate. At that time the seventh indiction was turning on its course."

Once, when the saint was visiting the workmen at the bridge, he saw a poor woman carrying eggs back home in her basket. She dropped the basket, and, to her great distress, the eggs broke. However, the holy bishop, taking pity on her, restored the eggs whole and unbroken to the basket.

It is at about this time that an Anglo-Saxon poem called *Judith* was composed; it has been described as "one of the noblest poems in the whole range of Old English Literature, combining the highest dramatic and constructive power with the utmost brilliance of language and metre". Professor Cook of Yale University thinks that it was composed by St. Swithun himself in about the year 856 in gratitude for the deliverance of Wessex from the fury of the Vikings and dedicated to Judith, wife of King Ethelwulf. In the poem the Vikings are represented by the Assyrians, the English by the Jews, and Queen Judith by her namesake in the Bible story.

It was a very difficult time for the English people as the pagan Vikings invaded the land and spread death and destruction far and wide. In 860 a great naval force even stormed the city of Winchester itself, but was later defeated. Swithun not only protected the kingdom by his prayers, but also built and restored many churches in his diocese, travelling everywhere on foot. When he gave a banquet, he invited the poor, not the rich.

St. Swithun died on July 2, 862 or 863, and was buried in a simple grave outside the west door of the Old Minster, as he had requested, so that the rain from the church roof would fall on him and the feet of passers-by would tread on him. The grave was identified and marked by archaeologists in 1971.

For over a hundred years, his memory was forgotten. But the Lord did not wish this light to remain hidden under a bushel. And on July 15, 971 his relics were translated into the cathedral to the accompaniment of a greater outpouring of miracles than had ever been seen in Orthodox England.

About twenty years later, this event was recorded by Abbot Aelfric:- "For three years before the saint was translated into the church from the stone coffin which now stands inside the new building, he appeared in a vision to a certain faithful blacksmith, wonderfully arrayed, and said: 'Do you know the priest Edsige, who with other priests was driven out of the old monastery by Bishop Ethelwold for their misconduct?' The smith then answered the venerable Swithun as follows: 'I knew him long ago, sir, but he left this place, and I do not know for certain where he is living now.' Then the holy man said again to the old smith: 'He is now living in Winchcombe. This is the truth. And now I adjure you in the name of Christ: go quickly and give this message, that Swithun the bishop has commanded him to go to Bishop Ethelwold and say that he must himself open my grave and bring my bones inside the church; for he has been counted worthy that in his time I should be made known to men.' Then the smith said to him: 'O sir, Edsige will not believe my words.' Then the bishop said again: 'Let him go to my grave and pull a ring out of the coffin; and if the ring yields at the first tug then he will know for certain that I have sent you to

him. If the ring will not come away easily, then he will by no means accept what I say. And after that tell him that he must amend his ways in accordance with the will of the Lord, and hasten single-mindedly to eternal life. And tell everyone that as soon as they open my grave they will find such a valuable hoard that their precious gold will be as nothing in comparison.' Then holy Swithun vanished from the smith's sight.

"However, he did not dare to tell anyone about this vision, fearing to be regarded as an untruthful messenger. So the holy man spoke to him again, and yet a third time, and severely reproved him for not acting in obedience to his commands. Then at last the smith went to his burial-place, and, albeit fearfully, took hold of the ring, crying out to God: 'O Lord God, the Creator of all things, grant me, a sinner, to pull this ring out of the lid, if he who spoke to me three times in a dream is really lying here inside.' Then he pulled the iron out of the stone as easily as if it had stood in sand, and wondered greatly at what had happened. Then he put it back in the hole and pressed it in with his foot. Again it stuck so firmly that no one was able to pull it out. The smith went away awestruck, and in the market-place he met a serf of Edsige's, to whom he related exactly what Swithun had commanded him to report it to his master.

"The serf consented, but at first did not dare to tell his master, until he felt that no good would come from concealing the saint's command. Then he told him in order what Swithun had commanded. Now at that time Edsige avoided Bishop Ethelwold and all the monks who were in the minster because of his ejection by then. So he did not obey the saint's command, although the saint was a blood-relative of his. Within two years, however, he retreated to that same monastery, and by the grace of God became a monk, continuing there until he departed this life. Blessed is Almighty God, Who humbles the proud while exalting the humble to high estate, and corrects the sinful while always preserving the good who hope in Him.

"Again, there was a certain poor peasant, awfully hunch-backed and bent over in consequence, to whom it was revealed in a dream that he would obtain bodily health and recovery from his crippled state at Swithun's sepulchre. And so he arose joyfully in the morning, crept on two crutches to Winchester and sought the saint as he had been instructed, praying for his health on bended knee. Then he was healed by the holy bishop, so that no trace of the hump which had oppressed him could be seen. At that time the monks did not know about St. Swithun, thinking that some other saint had healed the man. But the peasant said that it was Swithun who had healed him, for he knew best about the matter.

"A certain man was afflicted with a very distressing disease, so that he could hardly open his eyes or utter a word, but lay in torment thus, despairing of his life. Then all his friends wanted to carry him to the New Minster, to [the relics

of] St. Judoc, so that he could recover his health there. But someone told them that it would be better to take the sick man to the Old Minster, to Swithun's grave. This they did, and that night they kept vigil at the grave with him, praying to Almighty God to grant the sick man health through St. Swithun. The sick man also watched until daybreak. Then he fell asleep, and it seemed to all of them as if the tomb was rocking, while to him it seemed as if someone was dragging one of his shoes off his feet. Suddenly he awoke, healed by the holy Swithun. They looked carefully for the shoe, but no one could find it. So they returned home with the man who had been healed.

"Through the power of God eight sick men were miraculously healed at the holy tomb before the body was removed from it.

"After these signs, King Edgar desired the holy man's exhumation, and told the venerable Ethelwold to translate it with great pomp. Then Bishop Ethelwold, accompanied by abbots and monks, took up the saint and and bore him into the church of St. Peter. There he remains in honour, working miracles. Then within three days four sick men were healed by the holy man; and there were few days within the next five months in which at least three sick people were not healed – sometimes five or six, or seven or eight, ten or twelve, sixteen or eighteen. Within ten days two hundred men had been healed, and so many within twelve months that no one could count them. The cemetery was filled with cripples, so that the people could hardly get into the minster. And within a few days they were all so miraculously healed that one could not find a sick man in the whole of that vast crowd.

"At that time there lived in the Isle of Wight three women, two of whom had been blind for nine years, and the third had never seen the light of the sun. With some difficulty they obtained a dumb guide and came to the saint, and watched there for one night, and were healed, both the blind woman and the dumb guide. Then the boy told the sacristan, saying that he had never been able to speak before, and asking for the appointed hymn of praise to be sung.

"At about the same time a certain bondwoman was caught and sentenced to be flogged for some very minor fault. She was put in custody until the morning, when she was to be severely beaten. All night she lay awake, weeping and calling on the holy Swithun to help her, the wretched one, praying that through the power of God he would deliver her from the cruel stripes. When dawn broke, and they began to sing the Praises, the fetters on her feet suddenly fell off, and she ran, with hands still bound, to the church and the blessed saint, in accordance with his will. Then her lord came after her and freed her, loosing her bonds, for the sake of St. Swithun.

"A certain nobleman had lain crippled by paralysis for many years, being

unable to move from his bed. Then he said that he wanted to travel to Winchester, if only in his horse-litter, and pray for his healing. While he was saying this to his servants and friends, he was cured. Nevertheless, he made his way to the saint on foot, travelling in front of the company for the whole journey, and earnestly thanked the saint for his recovery."

On one day, twenty-five men suffering from various diseases came to the saint, imploring him to help them. Some were blind, some lame, some deaf and some dumb. They were all healed at the same time through the saint's intercession.

There was a certain very rich nobleman who went suddenly blind. He travelled to Rome to pray to the holy Apostles for a cure. For four years he stayed in Rome, but was not healed. Then he heard of St. Swithun, and of the miracles he had wrought since he had left England. Travelling back in haste, he came to the saint and was healed there, returning home with perfect sight.

"Another man," continues Abbot Aelfric, "had been blind for seven whole years. He had a guide who led him everywhere. One day he went out, but the guide became angry and left him. At a loss how to return home, the blind man cried out to god and St. Swithun in great anguish. He was immediately healed and returned home joyfully without a guide, for which his relatives thanked God fervently.

"Then the venerable and blessed Ethelwold, who was the bishop of Winchester at that time, commanded all the monks who were living in the monastery to go in procession to the church and praise the saint with hymns, and in this way to magnify God because of the great saint every time a sick man was healed. This they did immediately, and sang the Te Deum so often – sometimes three, sometimes four times in a night – that they came to hate getting up to do this, as they wanted to go on sleeping. At length they gave up the chanting altogether, for the bishop was busy with the king and had no means of knowing that they were not chanting the Te Deum continually. Then St. Swithun himself came, wonderfully adorned, to a certain good man, and said: 'Go now to the Old Minster and tell the monks that God very much dislikes their murmuring and sloth, for they see God's wonders among them every day but will not praise Christ with chanting as the bishop told the brethren to do. And tell them that if they do not sing the hymn, immediately the miracles will cease. However, if they sing the Te Deum every time a miracle is performed and a sick man is healed, then so many miracles will be wrought among them that no one will be able to remember so many miracles having been wrought in his lifetime by anyone. Then the man awoke from that joyous sleep, lamenting that he could no longer see the bright light which he had seen around St. Swithun. He arose, however, and went quickly to Bishop Ethelwold, and told him all that

had happened. Ethelwold then immediately sent from the king's court to the monks, and told them to sing the Te Deum as he had commanded, with the warning that anyone who neglected this would heavily atone for it by seven days' continuous fasting. From that time they always observed this custom, as we ourselves have very often seen; for we have not infrequently sung this hymn with them.

"A certain man was unjustly accused of stealing, and sentenced to having his eyes put out and his ears cut off. He was immediately seized and the sentenced carried out. Then the blood ran down into his head so that he could not hear, and he continued blind and deaf for seven months. Until, that is, he went in faith to St. Swithun, and sought out his relics, and prayed to him that he would at least receive his hearing; for he did not believe that he would ever recover his sight. And he said that he had been unjustly punished in this way. Then through Swithun's intercession a wonder of God was wrought in that man so that he saw clearly with perfect eyes, although they had been thrust out of their sockets and one ball removed entirely, while the other hung down his cheek. He was also granted good hearing – he who had formerly possessed neither eyes nor hearing.

"However, we should understand that we should not pray to God's saints as to God Himself, for He alone is God and above all things; but we should truly pray to the saints to intercede with the omnipotent God, Who is their Lord, that He may come to our aid.

"Once some men were keeping vigil beside a corpse in the customary manner, when a fool, as if in jest, told them with unseemly laughter that he was Swithun. 'You may know that I am in fact Swithun who work these miracles, and it is my will that you bring your candles to me and prostrate yourselves, and I shall grant you your desire.' He foolishly blasphemed in this way for a long time until the suddenly fell to the ground, silenced, and as if dead. Immediately they carried him home to his bed, where he lay for a long time, confessing that he had presumptuously spoken foolish words, and asking forgiveness from the saint. And by the saint's intercession he was healed…

"A certain nobleman's servant had a sudden fall from his horse, so that his arm and left leg were broken. And he was so crushed that he immediately thought that he would die. He had been previously very dear to his lord, and the lord was in great sorrow for his servant, and besought the Almighty from his inmost heart to help the man through the great Swithun. And he also appealed to Swithun, crying out in sorrow: 'O holy Swithun, pray to Jesus that He may grant life to this sick servant. If He does this through you, I shall be more faithful to the living God all the days of my life.' Then the servant arose, made whole through St. Swithun. Then the lord rejoiced, and with faith gave

praise to God.

"A certain old nobleman in the Isle of Wight had lain bedridden for some nine years, and could not leave his bed without being carried. Two shining saints appeared to him in a dream and told him to run with them quickly. The sick man said: 'How can I run with you when it is nine years now that I have been unable to rise from this bed alone, without men's help?' Then the saints said: 'If you go with us now, you will come to that place where you will receive healing.' Then he was very glad, and wanted to go with them; and when he found himself unable to travel with them, they flew through the air and carried him until they came to a solitary field with brightly blooming flowers. And standing in the field was a church made of shining gold and precious stones. And St. Swithun stood before the altar, dressed in shining Eucharistic vestments, as if about to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. Then Swithun said to the sick man: 'I tell you, brother, from this time forth you must do evil to no man, nor curse any man, nor speak evil of any man, nor be malicious, nor agree with murderers, nor connive at wicked robbers and thieves, nor join in evil deeds, but rather, as best you can, help the needy with your own goods. Then you will be healed by the power of God.' Then the sick man reflected that he did not wish to do evil except to those who had done evil to him, and that he wished to do good to those who had done good to him. But St. Swithun knew the reasoning of his heart, and said to him cheerfully: 'Brother, I tell you, you must not do what you are thinking and harm any man, even if he harms you, but imitate your Lord, Who would not curse those who put Him to death, and commanded His followers to pray for their enemies. In the same way Paul the Apostle says to all Christians: 'If your enemy hungers, feed him, or if he thirsts, give him to drink.' Then the bedridden man said to the bishop: 'O sir, tell me what kind of man you are, since you are so well able to discern the thoughts of men.' Then St. Swithun said: 'I am he who has just recently come,' as if he said: 'I have just recently been made known'. 'What is your name?' asked the man. 'When you come to Winchester, you will know my name,' replied the saint. Then the man was immediately brought back to his bed, and awoke from sleep, and told his wife the whole of the vision he had seen. Then the woman said to him that it was Swithun who had instructed him and whom he had seen looking so glorious in the church. 'It would be very good if some men carried you to church,' she said, 'and if you prayed to the saint to cure you.' Then they immediately carried him from his bed to a church in the Isle of Wight, and he was instantly healed. And he went home whole and on his feet – he who had been carried on a bier to the church. After that he went very quickly to Winchester and told the venerable Bishop Ethelwold how he had been healed through St. Swithun. And Landferth the foreigner wrote it down in Latin…

"A certain Winchester man became angry with his serf because of some carelessness, and put him in fetters. He sat in the hated bonds for a long time

until, with the aid of a staff, he hopped out on one foot and with tears prayed to St. Swithun. The bolt immediately shot out of the fetter and the serf arose, freed by the saint.

"We cannot write," concludes Aelfric, "nor recount in words, all the miracles the holy Swithun wrought by the power of God in the sight of the people, both on prisoners and on the sick, to manifest to men that they, like Swithun who now shines out through his miracles, may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of heaven by good works. Both walls of the old church were hung, from end to end, with crutches and the stools of cripples who had been healed there. Even so they could not put half of them up…"

IN 1005, St. Alphege, Archbishop of Canterbury, who had been bishop of St. Swithun's see in Winchester, translated the precious head of the saint to Canterbury. An arm was given to Peterborough Abbey.

Another great miracle took place in the middle of the eleventh century, as Canon Frederick Busby recounts. Queen Emma, the mother of King Edward the Confessor, had been accused of unchastity with Bishop Alwyn of Winchester. In order to prove her innocent she was obliged to undergo the ordeal of walking over nine red-hot ploughshares placed on the pavement of the nave of the Cathedral. The Cathedral annalist says: 'The new was spread throughout the Kingdom that the Queen was to undergo this ordeal; and such was the throng of people who flocked to Winchester, that so vast a concourse on one day was never seen there before. The King himself, Saint Edward, came to Winchester; nor did a single noble of the Kingdom absent himself, except Archbishop Robert, who feigned illness and, being inimical to the Queen, had poisoned the King's mind against her,' so that if her innocence was proved he might be able to make his escape without difficulty. The pavement of the church being swept, there were placed upon it nine red-hot ploughshares, over which a short prayer was said, and then the Queen's shoes and stockings were drawn off, and laying aside here mantle and putting off her veil, with her garments girded closely about her, between two bishops, one on either hand, she was conducted to the torture. The bishops who led here wept, and, though they were more terrified than she was, they encouraged her not to be afraid. All persons who were within the church wept and there was a general exclamation: "O, St. Swithun, St. Swithun, help her!" The people cried with great vehemence that St. Swithun must hasten to the rescue. The Queen prayed: St. Swithun, rescue me from the fire that is prepared for me. Then followed a miracle. Guided by the Bishops she walked over the red-hot ploughshares, she felt neither the naked iron nor the fire…

St. Swithun's feastdays are July 2 and July 15.

Holy Father Swithun, pray to God for us!

(Sources: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle;* Abbot Aelfric, *Lives of the Saints,* Early English Texts Society, no. 76, 1881; Frederick Busby, *Saint Swithun,* Winchester, 1971; "Swithun and Scandinavia", in *Winchester Cathedral: Record 1972;* David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 365; John Crook, *St. Swithun,* Friends of Winchester Cathedral, 2010; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swithun; http://www.orthodoxengland.bt/internet.co.uk/servswit.htm; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 25-27, 34)

91. SAINT THEODORE, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Our holy Father Theodore was of Greek nationality, born in about 602 in St. Paul's native city of Tarsus in Cilicia, and educated in Athens and Constantinople, where he had fled from Arab or Persian invasions of his homeland. In Constantinople he was trained in all the sciences, and St. Agatho, Pope of Rome, calls him "philosopher" in his letter of instruction for his legates to the Sixth Ecumenical Council. However, his opposition to Monothelitism caused him to emigrate to Rome, where he settled in the Cilician monastery of St. Anastasios at Aquae Salvias. He was probably one of the Eastern monks who signed the libellus against Monothelitism in the second session of the Lateran Council of 649.

Several years later, the archbishop-elect of Canterbury, Wighard, died from plague in Rome. Pope Vitalian was looking around for a suitable man to replace Wighard, and his choice fell upon a holy and learned African abbot named Adrian. But Adrian declined the offer, and suggested Theodore instead. The Pope accepted this suggestion, but on condition that St. Adrian, who knew the West well, accompanied St. Theodore to England. Theodore was ordained through all the degrees of the priesthood, and was consecrated archbishop on March 26, 668. Then, together with Adrian, the Northumbrian abbot, Benedict Biscop, and John, a cantor of the Roman Church, he set out for Britain. On the way, in Paris, this group met Bishop Agilbert, formerly of Dorchester-on-Thames. Finally, on May 27, 669, Theodore and his companions arrived in Canterbury.

The new archbishop immediately appointed Benedict abbot of St. Peter's monastery in Canterbury until 671, when Adrian was able to take over. In spite of his age and the fact that he was a complete stranger to his semi-barbarian diocese, St. Theodore acted with great vigour and success in the remaining twenty-two years of his earthly life, becoming, as the Venerable Bede wrote, "the first archbishop whom the whole of the English Church obeyed". He convened councils, consecrated bishops, disciplined offenders and travelled the length and breadth of the land on horseback. Together with St. Adrian, he founded the famous school of Canterbury, at which Greek, Latin, theology, literature, science and mathematics were taught, and which became the main fount of learning for English churchmen until the time of the Venerable Bede. It was thus under his leadership that the English Church entered her "golden age", begetting a multitude of saints of both sexes and every station of life. Monastic life in particular reached a high pinnacle of excellence, and within a few years of St. Theodore's repose hundreds of English monks and nuns were pouring across the Channel to bring the light of Christ to their still-benighted kinsmen in Holland and Germany.

One of St. Theodore's main problems was how to relate to the Celtic Christians of the North and West of Britain who refused to accept the Roman-Byzantine Paschalion. The Synod of Whitby, which was convened in 664 just before the coming of St. Theodore, had decided in favour of the Roman-Byzantine Paschalion, and against the

Celtic Paschalion; but many of the Celts, believing their tradition to be more authentic, refused to accept this decision and remained in schism from the English Church. St. Theodore applied the canons concerning schismatics to those who rejected the Synod of Whitby. When Celtic bishops sought refuge in the English Church, he completed their consecrations before accepting them as bishops; and all English Christians who received communion in the schismatics' churches were subject to excommunication for one year. It was under his presidency that the Council of Hertford in 672 (the first Council of the All-English Church) decreed in its first canon: "that we all in common keep the holy day of Pascha on the Sunday after the fourteenth moon of the first month" and always after the Jewish Passover.

By the end of the 670s there were twelve bishops accepting St. Theodore's authority in England. Kings, too, recognized his authority; for in 679, after the Battle of the Trent, he reconciled Kings Egfrid and Aethelred. And towards the end of his life, in 686, he became reconciled with St. Wilfred, archbishop of York, who had appealed to Rome against his decision to divide the diocese of York into four smaller dioceses.

St. Theodore convened local councils at Burford in 679 and Twyford near the River Alne in 684. But the most important was the Synod of Hatfield in 679, at which the heresy of Monothelitism was condemned and, in the Venerable Bede's words, "the bishops of the island of Britain united to proclaim the true and Orthodox faith". The Fathers of this Council confirmed the first Five Ecumenical Councils, affirming "the Trinity Consubstantial and Unity in Trinity, that is One God subsisting in three consubstantial Persons of equal glory and honour". Although the text of this Council as it has come down to us contains the words: "and the Holy Spirit ineffably proceeding from the Father and the Son", the Orthodox scholar Adam Zernikav of Chernigov established in 1682 that the words "ineffably" and "from the Son" had been inserted at a later date.

Of particular importance for later generations was the collection of canons known as *Theodore's Penitential*, which, though not written by St. Theodore himself, contain decisions made by him. One of these decrees, for example, was that while "no man may leave his lawful wife except on account of fornication", there are other causes which may lead to the dissolution of marriage and the possibility of remarriage, including cases of captivity, penal slavery and permanent abandonment.

In the next century Archbishop Egbert of York wrote: "It is since the times of St. Theodore that not only the clergy in the monasteries, but also the laity with their wives and families, would resort to their confessors, and would wash themselves of sin through tears, community life, fasts, vigils, prayers and alms during the full twelve days before Christmas, and so purified, would receive the Lord's Communion on His Nativity."

St. Theodore reposed on September 19, 690, at about the age of eighty-eight. He was

buried close to St. Augustine, the first archbishop of Canterbury, in the monastery of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul in Canterbury. In 1091, some years after England had fallen away from the Orthodox Church, his relics were uncovered and found to be incorrupt.

St. Theodore is commemorated on September 19.

Holy Father Theodore, pray to God for us!

(Sources: The Venerable Bede, *A History of the English Church and People*; A.W. Haddan & W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. III, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1871, 1964; Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition*, The English Orthodox Trust, 1995, chapter 64; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 370-371; Acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0429/_P4.HTM; Nicholas Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury,* London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1996; Andrew Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes, Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, AD 590-752,* E-book, pp. 176-177)

92. SAINT WALSTAN OF BAWBURGH AND TAVERHAM

Our holy Father Walstan was born in East Anglia, either at Bawburgh in Norfolk or at Blythburgh in Suffolk, during the reign of King Ethelred, in the late tenth century. He was said to have been of noble lineage and related to the king's son, Edmund Ironside. Walstan's father is recorded as having been called Benedict, and his mother - Blide (or Blythe); the St. Blide who was buried and honoured at Marsham.

At the age of 12, Walstan renounced his patrimony, left home and travelled to Taverham, just north of Norwich, where he sought employment as a farm labourer. He was hired by a local farmer, who put him to work in the fields and woodland in the surrounding area near Costessey. There he laboured with great devotion and obedience, combining his toil with constant prayer and frequent fasting. He also took a vow of celibacy although he never received monastic tonsure. All the time he kept his true identity (as a nobleman) a secret. He was so charitable that he frequently gave his meagre rations to the poor, and sometimes even his shoes, going barefoot as a result. On one occasion he was severely punished by his employer's wife for what she had come to regard as his foolishness.

Eventually, the farmer wished to adopt St. Walstan as his heir. The saint refused this honour. Instead he asked that, at his death, he be given two oxen to draw his body wherever they wanted to its place of burial. This request was granted and two white ox calves were set aside for this eventuality.

Three days before his death, St. Walstan received an angelic visitation, witnessed by a companion, forewarning him of his death and translation to heaven. The priest of Taverham church who came to give him Holy Communion omitted to bring water with him to mix with the wine. At the prayers of the saint a well-spring miraculously sprang up. The well can still be seen to this day.

St. Walstan died in a field, praying for all the sick and for cattle, at noon on May 30, 1016 (or 1019). His body was placed on a rough cart and was drawn by the two white oxen, who wended their way through Costessy Woods, across the River Wensum until they reached to what is now Costessy Park. At this point the oxen rested for a while, a sacred spring arising there. Then they set off again towards Bawburgh church, whose north wall miraculously opened up allowing the oxen, cart and body, together with all those accompanied it, into the church, after which the wall closed and became whole again. Inside, Bishop Aelfgar of Elmham with forty monks carried out the funeral service. (Bishop Aelfgar, known as "the almsgiver", had been a disciple of St. Dunstan, and died during Mattins on Christmas Day, 1021.)

The saint's shrine became a popular place of pilgrimage down the centuries, and

many miracles were wrought there. Thus through the prayers of the saint a man who had lain drowned in a pond for two days was resuscitated. Many of his miracles relate to the healing of animals and the abundance of crops, and in 1989 he was declared "Patron Saint of British Food and Farming".

In the general destruction of the Reformation, the shrine was demolished and St. Walstan's relics were burnt and scattered. The wells were given over to secular and superstitious use. The wells at Taverham and Costessy eventually dried up, but the one at Bawburgh survived. However, there is now a revival of interest in, and devotion to, St. Walstan.

Although Walstan's name does not appear on any Anglo-Saxon calendar, the veneration of him in East Anglia has been strong and persistent since Orthodox times. His feastday is May 30.

Holy Father Walstan, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Fr. Elias Jones, "The Life of our Father among the Saints, Righteous Walstan the Generous of Taverham", *Orthodox News*, vol. 12, no. 1, Eastertide, 1998, pp. 1, 5; *The English Saints: East Anglia*, Canterbury: Norwich Press, 1999, pp. 179-187; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, D, 1021; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 397-398; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 128-129)

93. SAINT WENDREDA, HERMITESS OF MARCH

Our holy Mother Wendreda was the sister of Saints Etheldreda, Sexburga, Ermenhilda and Withburga. She was, it seems, a hermitess - first in Exning, where a holy well is named after her, and then at March in Cambridgeshire. Nothing else is known of her life. However, in the late tenth century Abbot Aelsi of Ely asked King Ethelred for permission "to translate the relics of the holy virgin Wendreda" from March to Ely, to join the relics of her holy sisters. This request was granted. The abbot then enclosed the relics in a shrine made of gold and precious stones.

In 1016 the Danes invaded East Anglia, and King Edmund Ironside marched against them. At the request of the king, the relics of St. Wendreda were carried by four monks to the battlefield. On October 16, the battle of Ashington was joined, and the English were defeated. The four monks were also killed, and the relics of the saint came into the possession of King Canute. He gave them to the Church of Canterbury. However, they were returned to March in 1343, only to be lost at the Reformation. Her feastday is January 22.

Holy Mother Wendreda, pray to God for us!

(Sources: *Liber Eliensis*, 76, 77; Trevor Bevis, *Fenland Saints and Shrines*; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1978, p. 400; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places*, Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 111-112)

94. SAINT WERBURGA, ABBESS OF CHESTER

Our holy Mother Werburga was the daughter of King Wulfhere, first Christian king of Mercia and his wife, St. Ermenhilda. On the death of her father, in about 673, she and her mother became nuns in Ely under her grandmother St. Sexburga. Upon the death of St. Sexburga, her mother, St. Ermenhilda became abbess of Ely and appointed her daughter as abbess of Minster-in-Sheppy. Then her uncle, Ethelred, who had succeeded her father on the throne of Mercia, placed her in charge of all the convents in his kingdom – Weedon, Hanbury and Trentham. On the death of her mother she became fourth abbess of Ely.

St. Werburga is especially associated with the convents of Hanbury in Staffordshire and Threckingham in Lincolnshire. But it was on her father's royal estate at Weedon, in Northamptionshire, that the most famous incident in her life took place. Goscelin tells the story:-

"When the royal virgin was spending some time in her house at this same Weedon, a huge flock of wild geese… ravaged the fields, as is their wont. A domestic servant, a countryman, told his mistress of the damage that was being done. Then with great faith she told him to bring them all and shut them up just as one does with animals who eat other people's corn. 'Off you go,' she said, 'and bring all the birds in here.' The man went, greatly amazed and wondering whether this command was nonsense or madness. For how could a person, unfamiliar to the geese and of whom they would be suspicious, compel so many winged creatures to walk into captivity, when they could fly off and escape? 'How,' he said, 'am I to direct the birds towards this place, when they will fly into the air at my first approach?' Then the virgin, reiterating her demand, said, 'Go, the sooner the better, and bring all the geese into my custody in accordance with my order.' He was afraid to neglect even a useless command of his saintly mistress, and went behind all the geese and said to them, 'Off you go then to our mistress.' He drove them all in front of him as if they were a tame flock. Not one bird from all that gathering raise a wing, but like wingless chicks or as if they their wings cut off, they moved on foot, walking with bowed heads as if ashamed of their bad behaviour. So they assembled within the courtyard of their judge, trembling and subdued as if found guilty. They were shut up as captives, or more precisely, they were preserved to be the object of her kindness.

"The daughter of light passed that night, as she was accustomed, in hymns and prayer to God. In the morning all the visitors made a din in shrill tones to their mistress, as if they were asking for pardon and permission to leave. But she, as she was most kind to every creature of God, ordered that they be pardoned and set free. She sternly forbade them ever again to return there. But one of her servants had gone out and stolen one of them, and then carried it off and hidden it.

"When the geese all raised their wings and flew off into the air, they rested and looked around, and reckoned up the loss to their company and found that one was missing. Immediately the whole host gathered above the virgin's house and bewailed with a great din the harm done to their fellow-creature. Their forces spread out everywhere and completely covered the sky, and it seemed that they were pleading in these human words for the compassionate Werburga to give her judgement: 'Why, mistress, when your clemency released all of us, is one of us held captive? And can this iniquity be concealed in your holy house, and this detestable theft flourish under your innocence?' So at the noise and complaint of the great host the divine virgin went out and understood its cause, just as if it had been put in the above words. Straightway the theft was investigated and the culprit himself admitted it. The holy peacemaker took the bird back and reunited it with its tribe, and ordered it to be off immediately on the conditions previously given.

"She then rejoiced with them, by saying in a kindly spirit, 'Birds of the air, bless the Lord.' Without a moment's delay the whole flock flew away and not a single creature of that kind has ever been found on the land of the blessed Werburga, as is well known."

Goscelin continues: "But Werburga's great humility, and also her eminence before God, are confirmed by other signs in this same place of Weedon. She had a herdsman, a man of pious nature and holy living - as far as was possible in a life of subjection to a human master. He is remembered in that area for the renown of his meritorious deeds, and is revered as a saint on his own day. It once chanced that his mistress' bailiff was beating him most cruelly with the whip, and he was bearing it all with great tranquillity in God's name. Then the blessed compassion of the virgin could not bear that he should suffer, and throwing herself down at the wicked slave-master's feet, she cried with a prayer and a rebuke: 'For the love of God, spare him! Why are you tearing this innocent man to pieces? He is more acceptable, I believe, before the Most High Judge than all of us'. And when he was prevailed upon all too slowly - either out of violent rage or out of pride - immediately his brutal blows and savage glances were diverted by the celestial indignation on to his own back. Thus at last he himself, as indeed was more incumbent upon him - fell at his mistress' feet and the pardon which he had denied to the innocent man he begged with tears for his own offence. And immediately, through the kind intervention of the saint, he was returned to his former state. But the celebrated man of God, Alnoth, lies buried at Stowe, one league from Bugbrook. Robbers martyred him as he led an anchorite's life in a wood, and so destroyed one who by miracles and by common acclaim was acceptable to God."

St. Werburga had the gifts of healing and prophecy. And, foreseeing the day of her death, she ordered that her nuns at Hanbury, on hearing of her death, should come and take her body. Then, on February 3, in one of the years between 700 and 707, she died in her convent at Threckingham (according to another source,

Trentham).

However, the people of Threckingham did not want the holy body to be removed from their midst. So they placed it in the church, bolted the gates and kept a guard over it. But then, by the Providence of God, a heavy sleep fell upon them just as a large band of the people of Hanbury together with some priests arrived. Moreover, at that moment all the bolts and bars of the monastery fell to the ground. So the people of Hanbury were able to take the holy body to their own monastery and bury it there with great joy and thanksgiving.

Many miracles were wrought at St. Werburga's tomb: sight was restored to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, and lepers and other sick people were healed. About nine years after her burial King Ceonred of Mercia ordered that her remains be raised from the tomb. Then it was found that the holy virgin's body was completely incorrupt: "Her clothes were seen in all respects radiant and undefiled just as when they had been put on first; when her veil was reverently drawn aside, her face was seen to be unmarred, her cheeks rosy as in the first bloom of youth." King Coenred then renounced the world and became a monk in Rome, where he died.

In 907 (or 875, according to another source), for fear of the Danes the relics of St. Werburga were translated from Hanbury to Chester and placed in the church on the site of the present cathedral. Later, as the pagan Danes approached the city, the incorrupt relics of the saint suddenly disintegrated, "lest the enemy, not believing in the miracles of God, and knowing no gratitude for the blessings she had bestowed, should lay impious hands upon her."

St. Werburga is commemorated on February 3.

Holy Mother Werburga, pray to God for us!

(Sources: *Liber Eliensis; The Life of St. Werburg* by Goscelin the Monk, Chester Cathedral, 1974; Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition*, English Orthodox Trust, 1995, chapter 82; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1978, p. 401; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 306, 330; Barbara Cooper, "The Lives of the Female Saints of Ely", *Catholic Life,* December, 2009, pp. 22-23)

95. SAINT WINIFRED, VIRGIN-MARTYR OF HOLYWELL

St. Winifred (Gwenfrewi) was born early in the seventh century. Her father was Teutyth (Tevith or Tenyth or Theuith), the son of Eilud, "a valiant soldier", who lived in Tegeingl (modern Flintshire), and her mother was Gwenlo, the daughter of Bugi, who was also the father of St. Beuno. Winifred was their only child.

Once St. Beuno came to Teutyth, who asked him to train his daughter to become a nun. Beuno accepted, but stipulated that he should have in return a grant of land. Teutyth was not able to do this without the consent of King Eliuth, who refused on the grounds that this would mean separating the land from the common land of the tribe. However, he finally agreed to surrender one villa, Abeluyc; and on this Beuno built a cell and a church.

One Sunday a local prince called Caradog was hunting in the area. Feeling hot and thirsty, he stopped at the cottage of Teutyth and asked for a drink. The parents had gone to church, but Winifred was there. He attempted to seduce her, but she, on the excuse of going to her room to change her dress, rushed out of the back door of the cottage and ran towards the church further down the valley. Enraged, Caradog pursued her on his horse and caught up with her at the door of the church. Then he cut off her head with his sword. At the place where her head fell, a spring bubbled up from land that had previously been known as "Sechnant" or "Dry Ground" or "Dry Valley". To this day the pure, clear water that comes from the ground there is always at a temperature of 50 degrees centigrade.

St. Beuno rushed up and cursed Caradog, whereupon the earth opened up and he disappeared into the abyss. Then the saint put the virgin's head on her body, covering it with his mantle. To her grieving parents he said: "Wait a little, and leave her until the liturgy is over." Then, at the end of the liturgy, the virgin arose completely well and wiped the sweat and blood from her face. A white scar remained where her head had been reattached to her body…

After a time, Beuno prepared to leave Holywell. He told Winifred that she would remain for another seven years in that place, but would not die there. He also said that the blood stains on the stones of the well would remain as a witness to her martyrdom in defence of her chastity, that people who prayed three times at the well would receive their petitions through her intercession, and that if she wanted to send him a message, she should cast it into the well or the stream, and it would reach him at his seaside cell. And truly, each year on the eve of the feast of St. John the Baptist, June 23, the anniversary of her martyrdom, she would send the saint a message through the well. It would reach him at Clynnog on the North Wales coast.

Seven years later, in 637, St. Beuno died. At about that time a council of bishops was held, at which St. Winifred was present, which decreed that virgins should not live as solitary hermitesses, but live in monastic communities. This may have been the reason why she left Holywell with one companion and went to Bodvari, eight miles away, where there lived St. Deifer. The next day she went on to Henllan, where St. Sadwrn (Saturnus) lived. He told her to go to Gwytherin in the mountains of Denbighshire, and sent a deacon, St. Elerius (Hilary), to accompany her as her guide. It was this St. Hilary, a monk of St. Asaph's, who wrote her first life.

At Gwytherin there was a community of nuns led by Abbess Theonia, to whom St. Winifred entered into obedience. Soon Mother Theonia died, and St. Winifred succeeded her as abbess. After living a holy life there, foreseeing her death, she told her spiritual children not to be sad, and exhorted the younger nuns to preserve their chastity. She died on the eve of the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the anniversary of her martyrdom, in some year between 650 and 660. As she had prophesied, St. Elerius outlived her and buried her, in accordance with her wish, next to Abbess Theonia.

In 1138 the body of St. Winifred was translated from Gwytherin to Shrewsbury. Many miracles are recorded as taking place during the translation, and miracles continued for centuries afterwards at Holywell – even up to the present day. Her finger-bone can be found in the Catholic cathedral in Shrewsbury.

St. Winefred's feast-days are June 23 and November 3 (her translation feast, the main one).

Holy Mother Winifred, pray to God for us!

(Sources: *Buchedd Beuno* (1346) in A.W. Wade-Evans, "Beuno Sant", *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 1936, vol. 85, pp. 315ff; Baring-Gould and Fisher, *Lives of the British Saints,* 1908, pp. 185-196; Thomas Meyrick, *Life of St. Wenefred,* Llanerch, 1878, 1996; T. Charles-Edwards, "Saint Winefride and Her Well", London: Catholic Truth Society; Donald Attwater, *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints,* London: Penguin, 1965, p. 345; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 301-302, 303, 409, 418-419; Peter M. Smith, "The Holywell of Wales", *Catholic Life,* October, 2007, pp. 30-31)

96. SAINT WISTAN, MARTYR-KING OF MERCIA

The holy Martyr-King Wistan (Winston) succeeded to the throne of his grandfather, Wiglaf of Mercia, in 840. However, being too young to rule, he asked his mother Elfleda to act as regent.

Now an ambitious cousin of Wistan's, Berhtric or Brifardus by name, sought the hand of Elfleda in marriage. Wistan, however, refused to permit the marriage, considering it to be incestuous and against the canons of the Church. So Berhtric plotted to kill him.

He arranged to meet him at a place called since that time Wistanstowe (Wistow, Leicestershire). First he greeted him with the kiss of peace. But then he drew a sword from under his cloak and struck off the top of his head in the shape of a crown. Three of Wistan's followers fell with him. This took place in about 850.

A column of light was seen over the place of martyrdom; and on the first of June every year thereafter, for the space of one hour, "hairs" could be picked off the grass, touched and kissed.

Wistan's body was buried next to those of his father and grandfather at the monastery of Repton, the original crypt of which can still be seen.

In 1019 Abbot Alfwerd of Evesham asked King Canute to give him the relics of St. Wistan. From then on Evesham became the centre of his veneration. Just after the Norman Conquest of 1066, the Norman abbot of Evesham, Walter de Cerisy, had doubts whether Wistan was really a saint. So he decided to subject his relics to an ordeal by fire. However, as he was carrying the skull of the saint, it suddenly fell from his hands and began gushing rivers of sweat…

Over a century later, the miracles of the "hairs" was verified by a commission sent by Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury.

A small relic of the saint was returned to Repton in the thirteenth century.

In Orthodox times, the feastday of the saint was January 1, but later it was changed to June 1.

Holy Martyr-King Wistan, pray to God for us!

(Sources: C. Horstman (ed.), *Nova Legenda Angliae,* Oxford, 1901, p. 467; W.D. Macray (ed.), *Chronicon Abbatiae de Evesham,* Rolls series, 1863, pp. 232-234; P.

Grosjean, "De Codice Hagiographico Gothano", *Analecta Bollandiana,* vol. LVIII, 1940, pp. 90-103; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 410; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 265, 279)

97. SAINT WITHBURGA, HERMITESS OF EAST DEREHAM

Our holy Mother Withburga was the youngest daughter of King Anna of the East Angles and sister of St. Etheldreda. When she was still a young girl she was sent to live with her nurse at Holkham in Norfolk, where she later established a church.

For many years she lived as a hermitess at East Dereham. She used to be fed with milk by a tame doe. Once a man killed the doe, and very soon died himself.

At East Dereham St. Withburga founded a community, but died before the buildings were completed – according to one source, in 743. She was buried in the churchyard. In 798, her body was found to be incorrupt and was translated into the church. A holy well, which is still in existence, sprang up at the point where her body was exhumed.

In 974, Abbot Brithnoth of Ely went secretly at night to Dereham and removed the body on waggons to the river Brandun, hotly pursued by the men of Dereham. On the waterways the ship lost its course, but a column of fire appeared from heaven and showed the way to the shore. In 1106, the incorruption of St. Withburga's body was again confirmed.

The translation of St. Withburga is commemorated on July 8. Another feast-day is March 17.

Holy Mother Withburga, pray to God for us!

(Sources: *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, IV, 184; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1978, p. 411; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's Holiest Places,* Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, pp. 130-131; Barbara Cooper, "The Lives of the Female Saints of Ely", *Catholic Life,* December, 2009, pp. 22-23)

98. SAINT WULFHILDA, ABBESS OF BARKING

Our holy Mother Wulfhilda was the daughter of a wealthy nobleman named Wulfhelm. Wulfhelm had several children by his pious wife, but for eighteen years before the conception of Wulfhilda they had lived together as brother and sister so as to give themselves up more completely to prayer and fasting. One night, however, an angel appeared to each of them separately three times, and told them that they should come together so as to beget a daughter who would become a bride of Christ. The next morning they told each other the vision, and discovered that it had been identical for the two of them. So they accepted it as having come from God. Thus was the saint conceived and born; and shortly after her weaning she was given over to be brought up at the convent in Wilton.

One day the adolescent King Edgar came to Wilton on a hunting expedition and was struck by the beauty of the novice Wulfhilda. He made advances to her, but neither by flatteries nor threats could she be persuaded by him, but rather fled from him as a dove from a hawk. Not daring to snatch her from out of a monastery, the king conceived a cunning stratagem. The virgin had a paternal aunt named Wenfleda, who was abbess of a convent at Wherwell. Tempted by the desire to have a relative of hers as queen, she agreed to pretend that she was ill and lure the virgin to her on the pretext of wishing to dispose of her possessions before she died. So when Wulfhilda arrived she found her aunt, not ill as she had supposed, but full of good cheer from a royal banquet - and with the king sitting beside her. Everyone greeted and congratulated the new arrival, and she was commanded to deck herself royally and come before the king. Thus, shining in the splendour of golden raiment, she was acclaimed by everybody as worthy of being queen. The king sat her beside him, between himself and her aunt, and tempted her with blandishments, riches and the title of Queen of Britain. But she was silent, thinking only of flight, and pouring out her heart in prayer to God. She would not eat, feigning illness; and indeed, she was sick with anxiety, which made the feast like iron to her. At length, pleading tiredness, she was given permission to go out for a short time. But the king, knowing her intention, had placed guards at the doors to follow her even into her bedroom. Eventually she escaped through an underground passage, her guide being the same angel who had announced her birth to her parents.

Then, wandering through pathless places, she came to the humble hut of a peasant woman in Wherwell, where she stayed the night as a beggar. Meanwhile, there was much coming and going from the king's court, where everyone was worried, not so much because she had escaped, as that she might have perished. But she was not lured out of her hiding-place by the shouts of the men or the sounding of the trumpets, remembering the words of David: “God is in the midst of her, she shall not be shaken… He that dwelleth in the help of the Most High shall abide in the shelter of the God of heaven. He is my God, and I will hope in Him. For He shall deliver thee from every troubling word.” In the morning the king went away, and Wulfhilda, having generously rewarded her hostess (who was a servant of Wenfleda's), found her

travelling companions and returned to the safe refuge of Wilton.

When the king discovered this, he abandoned all his kingdom's affairs and flew back to Wilton. But she could not be persuaded by any means even to talk to him. However, he caught her in the courtyard outside the church, and, leaping at her as she was fleeing across the threshold, he took hold of her sleeve. But then a miracle took place: the sleeve came away in his hand without the slightest sign of tearing or cutting. She fled into the altar and took hold of the box containing the holy relics. But the king was smitten in his heart as once was David at the words of the Prophet Nathan. Trembling, he realized that the sleeve coming away in his hand indicated that she had been cut away from his lust by God Himself. Then he said:

"Fear not, O virgin acceptable to God. I promise in the sight of God that I shall molest you no longer, but will rather show myself to be your helper and protector with all benevolence. Only pray, I beseech you, that the most kind God will forgive my vanity and rashness. And now farewell, you who are given to a better Spouse. You will be dearer to us now, in accordance with a chaste and higher and incorruptible desire."

The virgin assented to these words with a humble nod. But she did not leave the place of prayer until the king had departed.

True to his promise, the king now extended his help to the saint, making her abbess of Barking in Essex and restoring it to what it had been under St. Ethelburga in the seventh century. He also greatly endowed the monastery at Horton in Dorset and likewise gave it, together with some other churches in Wessex, to Wulfhilda. And all this before she had even been tonsured!

When she did come to be tonsured, the grace of God was seen to descend upon her head in the form of a dove which was whiter than snow. Thereafter she governed the two convents which had been given to her for many years. Caring for the nuns with maternal love, she was an example to them in all virtue: in prayer and fasting and abstinence and in every kind of lowly work.

She was especially given to almsgiving. Early in the morning, she was at the doors of the church distributing alms to the poor and anticipating their petitions. Once a woman brought her blind child to her. The blessed virgin made the sign of the cross with a gold ring over the eyes of the child, and he immediately opened his eyes and, seeing the light of the ring and his mother's face, laughed joyfully. The saint told the woman not to publicize the miracle, but she was unable to restrain herself.

Once she gave hospitality to St. Aethelwold, bishop of Winchester, and his retinue, who were sailing down the Thames to meet the king and his fleet at Sandwich. Many people came to meet the prelate, and the demands on the supply of alcoholic drinks were great. But the level of wine never fell below its original level throughout the day - much to the astonishment of the bishop's servants who had measured it with a rod

beforehand.

On another occasion, she and the virgin Lenfleda were carrying some heavy jugs of water on their shoulders. But, finding them too heavy, they were forced to put them down. Then Wulfhilda said:

"It seems to me that we are good for nothing: the beasts of burden are more efficient and deserve their food more than we do."

In this way she gave a lesson in humility to Lenfleda, whom she knew, by the gift of prophecy that was in her, would be her successor. Lenfleda had been brought up in luxurious surroundings, but had always longed to be a nun. When her parents were about to give her in marriage, she ran away to the saint, who told her to preserve her virginity until the Coming of the Lord. She received the monastic tonsure, and was thereafter inseparable from her mistress.

As we have said, Wulfhilda was granted the gift of prophecy by the Lord. Once she rebuked one of the church's gold-workers for profligacy. But he responded with a torrent of furious words.

"Before your death," she said, "you will atone for the crime you have committed, as well as for your abuse."

A year before his death, the man became mute and was confined to his bed with a chronic illness. Remembering the saint's prophecy, he repented deeply of his sin.

After she had ruled the two monasteries in peace for several years, the envy of certain priests in Barking was aroused against the saint, and they prevailed upon Queen Elfrida to cast her out and install them. The sisters escorted their mother out of the monastery with tears and groans, as if they themselves wished to go with her. But she comforted them, saying on the threshold of the church:

"Weep not, my dearest daughters, but as I have instructed you, so remain in the Lord."

And, touching the threshold with her hand, she said:

"I tell you that on this very day twenty years from now, and by this very door by which I am going out, I shall return."

Then she retired to her other monastery at Horton, from where she continued to instruct and exhort the sisters of Barking.

Once Queen Elfrida visited the orphaned monastery. Immediately a variety of disasters overtook her: animals died, then her own men, and finally she herself fell ill.

As she was praying fearfully, the first abbess of the monastery, St. Ethelburga, appeared to her, looking ill and miserable, and with her clothing torn and in rags.

"Do you see the shame of my wretchedness," she said to the astonished queen. "You have taken away the ornament of my glory, the holy Wulfhilda, and in her long exile you have covered me with this squalid attire. And by what right do you occupy this holy place? Therefore I tell you that unless you recall her as soon as possible you will not recover from this illness but will die of it."

Terrified, the queen sent messengers with all speed to Wulfhilda, and received her back with all the honour due to her. This happened on the very day, and by the same door, as had been prophesied by the saint. Then the queen recovered from her illness, by which she knew that the cause of it had been her expulsion of Wulfhilda.

For seven more years the saint ruled both monasteries in peace, drawing all hearts by her love and gentleness and angelic life. Then, on Candlemas (February 2) in about the year 1000, she fell and hurt herself badly.

"We have fallen like a leaning wall," she said, "and soon the house, too, will fall."

Then she asked when was the feast of the translation of the relics of St. Aethelwold. The tenth of September, she was told.

"Good," she replied. "I have a little time left with you, until the birth of our supreme mistress, and the feast of our beloved prelate."

And so, on the vigil of St. Aethelwold's translation, September 9, which was during the feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God, after prayers and fastings and vigils, and having partaken of the Body and Blood of the Lord, she reposed in peace. She died in London, but her body was conveyed immediately to Barking and buried there. Many miracles were wrought in the presence of her holy relics, as well as at her other monastery of Horton.

When the sacred relics of St. Wulfhilda were being conveyed the seven miles from London to Barking, a certain man who had been rebuked for his sins by the saint during her earthly lifetime put his hand to the coffin. Immediately it became very heavy, as if rooted to the spot, so that no-one could move it. Everybody noticed this and blamed the man, whereupon he departed trembling. Immediately the coffin became light again. But the guilty man, overcome with grief, followed the procession with bitter tears and groans. At length the Lord had mercy on him, and his friends called him to help in carrying the body the last two miles to the monastery. There it was buried at the head of St. Ethelburga.

Once a woman who was both blind and lame came to the monastery at Horton. Having prayed, she received the sight of her eyes, which encouraged her to pray more

fervently for the use of her legs. Then it was intimated to her that she should go to the saint at Barking. Thither she dragged herself with great difficulty, and kept vigil at the tomb. Suddenly she was able to stand upright, healed in both her feet.

On September 2, 1030, the relics of St. Wulfhilda were translated together with those of Saints Ethelburga and Hildelitha, the first two abbesses of Barking.

St. Wulfhilda is commemorated on September 9.

Holy Mother Wulfhilda, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Mario Esposito, "La vie de Saint Vulfhilde par Goscelin de Cantorbery", *Analecta Bollandiana*, 1913, XXXII, 10-26; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Clarendon Press, 1978, pp. 411-12)

99. SAINT WULSIN, BISHOP OF SHERBORNE

Our holy Father Wulsin was a native of London. In 959, he was appointed by King Edgar and St. Dunstan as superior of St. Peter's, Westminster, and in 980 - as abbot. In 992, he was consecrated bishop of Sherborne while remaining abbot of Westminster. There he lived a life of great holiness and abstinence. He rebuilt the church at Sherborne and improved its endowment.

As Christmas of the year 1001 was approaching, he fell ill in the monastery called Bega's. "There had also fallen ill with him," wrote his biographer Goscelin, "a certain very faithful and obedient monk of his named Aethelwine, who, having heard of Wulsin's illness, was stricken with grief for his beloved lord, and sent to inquire solicitously what hope there was for his recovery. When the bishop saw the messenger of his most compassionate servant, he said:

"'Go back, brother, to your lord who has so warmly greeted me, and tell him from me, his master, that he should arrange everything and prepare himself with all care, for tomorrow he will go with me to the court of the Supreme King, where he will receive the reward of his faithful service which has been laid up for him by the Lord of all.'

"But when he was departing, the bishop besought his brethren in the following words:

"'Dearly beloved, I beseech you in my paternal love that you arrange that my faithful servant who is very well-known to you and who is about to go with me to the mercy of the Lord as I await my own death, should be taken with me to Sherborne and buried with me in the same monastery, so that he who was always devoted to me in this present life should also be with me in death and eternal peace. How blessed is the faith of the righteous! How true the word of the Lord: "He that heareth you," He says, "heareth Me, and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward." If we may draw parallels between great things and small ones, then it was thus that the evangelical forerunner sent a messenger to the Lord to ask whether they were waiting for Him or for another. Which is why he was counted worthy to be taught that the Lord would Himself follow His forerunner in death.'

"Now it seems that St. Wulsin was inspired by a prophetic spirit, since he foretold with such certainty the deaths both of himself and of the other man. All were amazed at this prophecy, and they were still more amazed at its fulfillment. And the hearts of all were overwhelmed by the setting of so great a light. However, just as once the disciples did not understand the word of the Lord concerning His Passion, and it was hidden from their stupefied senses, so these men did not grasp what they openly heard. Thus are we accustomed tardily to believe that which we do not wish to happen.

At length, however, convinced by this assertion, they asked him with deep groaning where he wished to be buried after his death. He indicated a very definite place in Sherborne which had just been prepared and in which his coffin was to be laid without fail.

"More than the others there mourned a certain priest by the name of Wulfric, who was counted worthy through his virtue of being very close to the holy bishop and who was specially informed of his secrets in God. This man was comforted by the paternal compassion of the saint, who, speaking with assurance in the Holy Spirit as if he had been already loosed from the bonds of the flesh and was already in heaven, said:

"'Weep not, dearest brother, for I go to the joy of my Lord Who calls me. Trust, moreover, and be sure that, twelve years after my death, the Lord in His goodness will recall His mercies with me, and cause men to wonder by the witness of miracles, and will visit His people in me through the revelation of His grace, so that, just as you now weep for me, so then you will rejoice, looking up on high.'

"This prophecy was fulfilled in its time.

"When, therefore, his last hour had come, the sick man was placed in a chair, as was the custom, and the athlete, being about to triumph over the powers of the air, was signed with the potent mystery of Holy Unction. And when the hand of the priest had touched his breast with the holy oil, he lifted up his eyes to the Lord, his Helper, and broke into the wonderful cry of the blessed Stephen:

"'Behold,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.'

"And with these words, he breathed out his spirit into the hands of the Lord...

"When, therefore, the bier for the venerable body had been constructed, it was borne by the orphaned flock to the diocese of Sherborne to the accompaniment of hymns mixed with groans. Almost an hour before, the above-mentioned monk Aethelwine had preceded his master in death... Thus when the funeral rites had been performed by the bishop in the presence of abbots, clergy and a multitude of people, the saint was buried together with his companion, as he had commanded, in the narthex of the church...

"But when the saint's body was being placed in that very grave which he had commissioned, it was found to be too long. His head and shoulders stuck out, and it was found to be impossible to compress the whole body into the confined space of the grave. Everyone was perturbed and at a loss what to do. For although this grave was the wrong size, they did not dare to place the saint in another one which he had not commissioned. But then Divine grace counted his family worthy to behold a new and mighty miracle which was performed in the presence of the people and which men of

good repute have confirmed. While everyone was hesitating, two bishops from neighbouring dioceses approached the tomb. Suddenly a noise was heard and the living earth moved of itself, and whatever was found outside the short cavity was found within it. It was as if the hard stone moved like sand or the dead man himself awoke from sleep on his bed and stretched his whole body out within the tomb. And the tomb was now too long to the same extent that it had been too short before. Then the crowd standing round shouted praises to heaven, and wept from joy and sorrow combined. But when the lid had been placed on the coffin with pious care, the heavenly treasure was hidden until the time of the Divine visitation by the saint himself..."

St. Wulsin reposed on January 8, a Sunday, in the year 1002. In the twelfth year after his repose, miracles began to take place at his tomb, as he had prophesied. We shall describe a few of the very many.

Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester fell ill with a lingering disease. He was told in a vision to go to the tomb of St. Wulsin and there receive healing. And when he had been brought to the saint's monastery in a carriage like the paralytic on a pallet, after staying the night there he was so completely healed that he who had been brought in a carriage returned on a horse. The day before the healing the bishops had been consulting with the king about appointing a successor to Wulfstan on account of his long illness. When they were unable to reach agreement about this, he suddenly entered the king's court to the amazement of all. On hearing his story, the bishops praised God and recognized in Wulsin a saint of God.

His fame spread far and wide, many people came to his tomb and a variety of illnesses were cured. On one occasion, during the vigil of Candlemas (The Presentation of the Lord to the Temple, February 2), a festive procession with burning candles was made to the tomb of the saint. Five sick people were laid on it by the multitude, and they were all immediately restored to health.

A certain woman from the saint's home city of London was in great pain from her back. She had gone round all the tombs of the saints, but without success. Having lost hope of a cure, she was returning home when the holy father appeared to her in her sleep and said:

"Go to Sherborne, to the place of my rest, and tell the brethren of the monastery from me that they must ask to have the pontifical chair which I commended to the abbess of Shaftesbury returned, and bring it back to my place with them. And let them know that you are to be healed by this sign and message in memory of me."

Wonderful revelation! Until the woman told it them, the brethren knew nothing about this relic of the bishop. They asked the abbess, who had forgotten all about it. But then they found it and brought it back with them. The woman received the reward of her journey and labour and obedience at the tomb of the saint: she returned home with her health restored.

The saint's body was translated from the narthex of the church by his successor in the see of Sherborne, Ethelric, and St. Aelfheah, archbishop of Canterbury, with the authorization of the king. It was decreed that the saint's feast should be celebrated in his province every year. And when Bishop Ethelric and his fellow bishops, clergy, abbots and a multitude of the people opened the lid of the coffin, a wonderful fragrance as if from Paradise filled the senses and gladdened the hearts of all.

The holy body was laid on the right side of the altar. And then the fame of the saint's miracles drew so many sufferers to Sherborne that you would have thought that the whole of England's sick population had come there. The whole church and narthex was filled to overflowing, and most of those who sought healing received it.

St. Wulsin was succeeded in his see by the above-mentioned Ethelric, who was followed by Ethelsin and Brihtwine. But Brihtwine was ejected from the see and a Canterbury monk name Elfmar introduced in his place. He proceeded to tyrannize the saint's flock, and seized one of the brethren's possessions. Thereupon he lost his sight, and only received it back again when he returned to his own monastery, that he might realize that he had lost his sight by St. Wulsin's judgement lest he should tyrannize his flock, and received it back only when he had given up the bishopric he did not deserve. Then Brihtwine was restored to his see.

In about the year 1050, Bishop Aelfwold of Sherborne ordered the sarcophagus of St. Wulsin to be translated into the church. While he and the prior of St. Wulsin's monastery, Aethelweard, had been debating whether to take this step, they had both separately had a revelation at the same time and during the same night. In the prior's vision, he had been admitted into the narthex where the saint's sarcophagus lay and had seen himself collecting golden honeycombs from the sarcophagus as if it had been a beehive. The smell of the honey filled the whole monastery with an incomparable fragrance. Waking up, he cried:

"Truly, O honey-flowing father, we have found that you are here and you have given these signs of your presence."

Immediately, he rushed to the bishop, who was just about to tell him about his own vision. he had found himself in a delightful flowering orchard, where he saw the holy father shining in glorious light and washing his head in a fountain. Struck with terror and joy, he went up to him and said:

"What are you doing, O fairest father?"

"What you should have done long ago," replied the saint.

When the bishop and prior had told each other of their vision, they were more than ever convinced of what they should do; and without procrastinating any longer, they

called the people and brethren and performed the service.

When the tomb was opened a wonderful fragrance filled the whole church, so that what the prior had sensed in his sleep he was now able to experience in reality. Nor did the fragrance fail throughout the service. When the holy bones had been brought into the church and placed on the south side of the main altar, they were reverently washed and then deposited in a casket in a specially prepared shrine, with an altar being situated at the saint's head, where Mattins and the Divine Liturgy were celebrated every day. In the washing of the bones Bishop Aelfwold saw the fulfilment of his vision. Then he built a new monastery adjoining the old, and once again transferred the relics of their sacred patron into it. He also, in response to many signs and revelations, translated the relics of St. Juthwara from Halstock to Sherborne; and there, through the intercession of the two saints, many miracles took place.

During the episcopate of Bishop Hermann, Aelfwold's successor, one of the church's golden shrines was stolen. Tired after a long search, the brethren were depressed, and especially the brother who had been appointed to guard the church. Then one night, when he was going into the altar at the end of Mattins, he suddenly heard a clear voice coming from the relics of St. Wulsin, which was audible to all the brethren in the choir as well:

"'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' saith the Lord."

Stunned, they all felt renewed hope in the intercession of the saint. For none doubted that this voice had been from heaven. That same day, the stolen object was recovered, and the thief was caught and punished.

Once an attempt was made to take away from the rights of the bishopric, and to remove a convent from Bishop Hermann's jurisdiction. But then by his command the relics of St. Wulsin were brought in. Immediately, as if in the presence of their leader and judge, the opponents ceased to put forward their claim, and the ancient rights of the bishopric were confirmed.

One of the brothers of the monastery had been violently shaken for nearly half a year by bouts of fever, which came, first every two days, and then daily. He hated all food, and had to be dragged to meals as if to torture. On the day of the solemn translation of the relics of St. Juthwara, he wanted to sing in the choir behind the procession, but was suddenly seized with trembling and pallor. Reluctantly, he began to move back as if to captivity. But the other brothers, mindful of the grace of the saints, gave him to drink from the water which had washed their bones. He was completely healed. Others suffering from fevers were also healed by drinking the holy water.

A married woman lay as if dead for three days. She was deaf and dumb, immobile as a stone, her eyes staring blankly in front of her, pupils and eyelids motionless. She gave no sign to those who called to her, and if carried her head and other limbs would

fall if not supported. Everyone was expecting her death, and the only talk was of her burial. On the third day her son, who was a monk brought up in the piety of the saints, came to see his parents, wishing to comfort the one and cure the other. But human wisdom saw no hope of a cure. Mindful, however, of the virtues of his native saints, he returned to the monastery and sent her some of the above-mentioned water. Immediately some of it was poured down her throat, she came to as if from sleep, moved her eyes, sat up, and eagerly drank the rest of the draught. Soon she was on her feet. Then all their friends who had been mourning the woman without hope rejoiced with her husband as if she had come back from the dead.

St. Wulsin is commemorated on January 8.

Holy Father Wulsin, pray to God for us!

(Sources: C.H. Talbot, "The Life of St. Wulsin of Sherborne by Goscelin", *Revue Benedictine*, LXIX, pp. 69-85; Frank Barlow, *The English Church 1000-1066*, Longmans, 1979, p. 68, note 2; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 415)

100. SAINT IVO, BISHOP, OF ST. IVE'S

Our holy Father Ivo was a Persian bishop who came to Britain in the sixth century. (According to Florence of Worcester, it was shortly before the arrival of St. Augustine of Canterbury in 597.) William of Malmesbury writes that "one day he wearied of the pleasures which his very powerful see commanded and he secretly left everything to his people and set out with as few as three comrades on a very long pilgrimage. Therefore after a journey of many years, pretending he was a peasant with ragged clothing, he at last set sail for England. And he was very amused by the outlandishness of the unknown language, because everyone would laugh at him as if he were a fool. So he stayed in the muddy province where he spent the rest of his life. His companions died after him in turn as God foresaw. The provincials knew neither the place of his tomb nor the name of the saint."

More details are supplied by the earliest life of the saint by Goscelin of Canterbury, who derived it from the account written by Abbot Andrew of Ramsey, who had travelled to Jerusalem in 1020 and on his return put down all he knew about Ivo: "After Great Asia, after Illyricum, after Rome, after traversing countless cities and peoples, he entered Gaul, and there he sparkled none the less with such signs that wonderful powers proclaimed his heavenly life and angelic teaching. And when the king of the Franks and the nobility of the kingdom and the people tried to keep him there - such an angel of God was he - with fitting honours, he, who had fled as an exile from the worldly glory of his parents and was fighting his way through many trials to enter the kingdom of God, could not be kept back by any earthly favour.

"Therefore, with all his acts confirmed by faith, he crossed the sea with his worthy comrades and companions to Britain; and according as the Lord had granted, he took pity on the white peoples with fatherly devotion and, as much by miracles as by preaching, he released them from the error of idolatry and more truly purified them with baptism. There was also, following the very loving father, a young man of noble rank called Patricius, son of a certain senator, who for the love of Christ, calling him through St. Ivo, not only disregarded his gentle birth and hereditary honours, but truly even deserted the maiden betrothed to him and with her all hope of descendants, and Stuck inseparably to his gentle master as much out of affection as from imitation. Blessed is he who followed the example of John, that most intimate and bosom friend of Christ.

"Then the healthgiving foreigner Ivo proceeded… to the village which is called Slepe [now St. Ives in Huntingdonshire]. Because he knew he had been led by the Lord to this particular place he persisted there for many years to the end of his life. Here indeed he assumed his divine role with such ardour, as if only now at last he had begun, and as if after a long thirst he had found the spring he sought. Here, I say, by keeping watch perpetually for his own life as well as everyone else's; here

by waiting for the Lord right to the end, his lamps of virtue blazing with an aura of chastity, at last he opened up with joy to the One who came and knocked; and the Lord's Ivo went to the Lord, who had left the Father and come into the world, and from the conquered world brought back the victory of the chosen people. Here his home was made in peace, and in peace he was buried: where, although he lay hidden from men's knowledge for about four hundred years (as is calculated from the discovery which follows), his name lives for ever…"

"Also before these times," writes Goscelin, "there was a very old man in Rome, talking to someone who came from England to pray, and when he learnt he was English he questioned him rather closely as to whether he knew a village called Slepe. When the stranger replied that he knew it very well the old man continued with these words: 'Believe this, and preserve it as my memory begins to fail: not far from the ford in the nearby river some very bright light-bringers lie hidden who in their own time will be raised up and clearly known.' The Englishman returned to his own country and with joyous faith spread the news of these things which afterwards were revealed to us and which today the truth has proved. A certain faithful priest, Durandus by name, also survived to these times, and he quite often promised those things which we have seen done."

On April 24, 1001 or 1002, continues Goscelin, "a villager struggling to furrow the earth with a plough hit against a holy coffin. Astonished and excited by the hope of wealth, he called back the oxen, which were at a standstill, and put every effort into clearing the site. And when he realised that it was a human burial he called his fellow ploughmen to him. When the cover was lifted they found religious tokens suggesting a priest. They were captivated by the shining brightness of a chalice there; thinking it silver they vied with each other to break it in pieces. They seized the priestly brooches, transparent with the lustre of glass, which Ramsey Abbey afterwards inherited with the holy body and those same fragments of the chalice.

"Soon a prior, the bailiff of the village, arrived, accompanied by a smith. They quickly sent a messenger to Abbot Eadnoth [of Ramsey, future bishop of Dorchester-on-Thames, who was killed by the pagan Danes in 1016], and after the remains of the man who was so clearly God's servant had been carefully washed he had them carried into the church and placed next to the altar."

According to William of Malmesbury, "immediately after the saint's body was exposed, wrapped in linen, from those very folds of the sepulchre there sprang a very plentiful fountain, bubbling swiftly. The spring remains to this day, sweet to drink and suitable for all illnesses. It is not possible to estimate the number, much less to recount the stories, of the many people healed by that blessed one, so much so that no saint in England is more responsive to prayer than Ivo, or more capable of effecting a cure."

The following night, continues Goscelin, "so that it would be obvious that the discovery had been made not by a lucky chance but by God's will, glorious Ivo appeared the following night to the smith of that same village as he slept. [His name was Ezi.] He was a harmless and simple man - to such the Lord speaks face to face, and entrusts His secrets, and he reveals to children things hidden from the wise.

"The saint was tall in stature; he had a white face, lively features and a burning gaze; he held a bishop's crozier in one hand, and an archbishop's cross in the other. He soothed the man, who was astonished by the vision, with an unusually sweet voice, and said: 'The body you are surprised to have found just now in such a place is mine: I am Bishop Ivo, who was buried here and have lain hidden with my blessed companions until now. Go tomorrow and measure out the place eight feet on the right-hand side of my grave, and you will find the tomb of one of my holy companions. The other also who was buried with us is to be found not far away, and these two exult with me in glory. When you are convinced by these proofs, supply them to the bailiff from me so that he may tell Abbot Eadnoth who may translate me with these my companions to the community at Ramsey.'

"Truly, since the poor man was terrified in spirit to report these heavenly orders, on the following night his negligence was rebuked and he was reproached by the same power. None the less on the third night while he was still hesitating, when he was in his first sleep the teacher himself appeared; and now he charged him quite severely with disobedience, and as the smith trembled and demanded a sign, he struck him with his bishop's crozier: 'And you will have this sign,' he said, 'and will never get rid of it, unless you tell what you have been ordered to.'

"Waking up after this the smith was sore in the place where he had felt the blow, as if he had been stabbed with a sword. And when he had reported the orders along with his painful sign, the man himself recovered: however the bailiff refused to believe the saint's great revelation, and pushed away the villager as if he was relating some fantastic tale. 'And should we translate,' he said, 'and glorify the worthless remains of some old cobbler as those of a saint?'

"His nightly sleep overcame the scoffer, and the holy bishop, seeming rather severe in manner and appearance, woke him up with a harsh speech: 'Get up,' he said, 'get up as quickly as possible. For I am that man whom yesterday you mocked as a cobbler and I have made for you leggings that will last. Put them on, and you will ride home in them in memory of me.' At these words the sleeping man stood up and sat down again; his just reprover had fashioned leggings very tightly for his legs. And so, struck down like this, he woke up, and then a very severe pain tied up all his shinbones from the feet up and he could neither stand nor walk. He rode to the monastery on someone else's horse; and after he entered he reported all

his own pains one by one, which he had refused to believe when they happened to someone else: and with much sorrow as well as in a truthful voice he proclaimed those things which he had condemned as fantasies."

Abbot Eadnoth was "delighted at such a wealth of unexpected treasure", and gave thanks to the bountiful Lord while the whole monastery rejoiced exceedingly (although they sympathized with their suffering brother). Then he rode to the relics of the saint and his companions in accordance with the revelation. But the horses were slow, and before he could reach Slepe the news of his intention had flown on ahead of him. So when he alighted in the field he was met by both nobles and people, who joyfully led him to the spot. Having bent the knee and implored the help of God with the brethren, he himself took a spade, and, following St. Ivo's instructions, had no sooner started knocking than he found this desire. The bodies of the saints indicated by the saint, together with the above-mentioned Patrick, were found. Then he took them into the church and laid both them and the body of St. Ivo out in preparation for a more fitting translation.

As for the smith, for fifteen years, to the very end of his life, he remained in the shackles that the holy Father had devised for him. However, he used this time in a spiritually profitable manner. For on the seventh day before his death, the saint appeared to him, this time as a kindly comforter, with shining face and vestments, and said in a most heart-warming voice: "Now the time has come for the wounds I inflicted on you to become the source of your healing, and for you, after your long night, to possess the joyful day of eternal felicity. Only be prepared on the seventh day from now - I shall come to take you up from this prison of flesh into our light." When he had told this to the brethren, the smith resolutely prepared to appear before the face of the Lord, and passed away on the day foretold by the saint.

Meanwhile, the relics of the saint and his companions had been translated to Ramsey Abbey with great ceremony by Abbots Eadnoth of Ramsey and Germanus of Cholsey, to the accompaniment of a huge crowd. "They flocked here," writes Goscelin, "from countryside and town: the open fields could scarcely hold the rush of people. Prayers and hymns of praise graced the air: heaven itself seemed to favour the saints, the sun seemed to rejoice with all its rays, such a sweet season and clear day had dawned. Many of the faithful also claim that during the entire journey of this joyful translation a snow-white dove flew over blessed Ivo's remains, a miracle so widely observed that all would affirm the dove had come from heaven to favour the saint. A crowd from Ramsey met with the rest of the people, dressed in white and crowned with purple ornaments, carrying before it banners bearing Christ's cross and Christian gilding, and splendid books of the saints, and lights on candelabra, and incense burning in censers, and whatever proof of devotion it could. The whole island echoed with songs and cymbals and the sound of bells; the woods and rivers were brilliant. In this way, with the angels rejoicing on high with the human choir, the precious pearls were taken to their

promised temple."

It was decreed that the day of the uncovering of St. Ivo's relics, April 24, together with the day of his translation, June 10, should be celebrated as feasts in perpetuity.

That night "Ivo himself appeared by night to a certain pious brother and asked the father of the monastery that they would build him such a place as would be accessible to anyone who wanted to pray. Thus the holy body was brought back, and wrapped in precious cloth, and reburied on the way up to the sanctuary: it may still be seen there today, and be touched by eyes and lips"

At the place where the saint's relics had been discovered, "Abbot Eadnoth at the wish of all the brothers built a church in honour and memory of the blessed Ivo in that very same place of his burial and discovery. It was furnished in this way: the sepulchre with its restoring flow was half below the wall and half Sticking out outside, so that whether the doors were open or closed there would be water of grace for people who hurried there. For the Lord is wonderful in His saints and He brought out a river from the rock; the tomb itself gushed with a healing spring, and the flow of this Stream gladdens the city of God in His faithful people."

The church was dedicated to St. Ivo and his blessed companions by Bishop Sigfrid, who had already proved his worth "as a soldier of Christ with Brother Wilfred of Ramsey Abbey through deep perils of the sea and heathen nations [the Norwegians]. Together they were unconquerable by many persecutions and insults; they sought out a tribe and gained it for the Saviour, and at last, when their swordsman failed them, they returned to England." Later Bishop Sigfrid went to Sweden, becoming the holy apostle of the Swedes.

Several miracles of healing were worked at the consecration of the church of St. Ivo, and many more were recorded later.

Thus Abbot Eadnoth was cured of gout after washing his foot in St. Ivo's spring. At another time "when he had been summoned to King Ethelred a very bad sickness attacked his entire body, and having taken over all his limbs it almost stole his voice when, look, remembering some brooches found with St. Ivo, which he kept with him, he dipped them into water that he himself had blessedl After his shoulders were sprinkled with it the troubling and upsetting pain fled and the sick man rested, and refreshed by sleep he got up well and, a happy man, he blessed the Lord in His saint.

During the time of Abbot Elfsige (1006/7-1042) a brother called Odo "was weak to the point of death with a pricking illness". Then someone remembered St. Ivo and a boat was sent (by far the fastest mode of transport in those watery fens) to bring back water from the spring. The monk, at his very last breath, had a vision

of a bishop, drank the water and recovered completely.

A certain boy was zealously fulfilling the duty of cook which had been assigned to him by his masters when some merchants came and drew some water from the tomb of St. Ivo. They poured into a big jug and placed it on the fire. However, when the meat which was supposed to have been boiled in the water was placed before the diners, it was found to be raw. The cause was soon discovered: the water in the jug was found to be stone-cold. For the water of St. Ivo never changes state.

Again, "a monk of the Coventry community, Patrick by name, was making a journey, and he excited the horse he was riding on by rushing to and fro with youthful frivolity until suddenly it fell with him in such a way that he lay as if lifeless with fractured shoulder-bones. And so he was carried off to the nearest village. When at last a long time had passed during which he lay without speaking, he had an inspiration and remembered the miracles he had heard of which had been performed long ago by divine influence through the blessed Ivo; he was Strong enough to find the words and asked that water for a bath be brought from Ivo's tomb and poured over his bruised body. When this had been done, he got better at once and as if he had had not a single injury on his body, and he instantly set out for Ramsey to offer thanks for his health. He planned also to do this every year on the anniversary day of his cure."

Goscelin himself was a beneficiary of the saint's healing power: "The author of this text, no less, explains that he fled for help to the protection of this most merciful father when he was twisted with gout both in the feet and the hands, and he promised for the sake of his health thirty masses and the same number of psalms, and so, when the fetters and handcuffs of his illness were released, the joy of good health took over.

"Afterwards as well, he reveals, pierced by a sharp pain in his teeth, he spent a sleepless night giving out troubled sighs, psalms and prayers; his rest upset and pain breaking out again and again. He meditated painfully, then, at the time of lauds he took himself to the healer-saint Ivo, and having delivered a speech there, he bathed his limbs in the saint's consecrated water and dipped in his mouth and teeth three times, and directly, among fellow-choristers of absolute trustworthiness, the pain ceased, and rejoicing in good health he proclaimed the saint's power."

Again, "a leprous woman, ulcerous, itching and bristling like a hedgehog with thorny prickling pains, had wandered all over the world looking for the protection of the saints. Then she came to St. Ivo's health-giving tomb. She washed herself in the spring which flowed there by divine providence, and by her Christian perseverance, because the Saviour approved her cure on account of her faith, not long afterwards she cast off her leprosy, put on clean skin and flesh and, leaving

with her health completely restored, she made known to everyone the great works of God through his saint."

"The news of such a rare thing attracted the county of Huntingdon and its numerous people, because there emerged not only a clear spring from the saint's sepulchre, but even one which cured sick people by a bath or a drink, Who was not glad, either healthy or feeble, to take home from there a little bottle full of such healthful liquid, the feeble for healing, the healthy for blessing?"

"One man sent away his wife, having divorced her against the command in the gospels because she had become blind, which he considered her fault. She went in the direction of each and every of the saints' dwellings in the hope of recovering her health, binding herself by a vow and a solemn oath not to return to her own husband ever again, nor ever to marry another man, if divine pity thought fit to give her back her sight.

"And when she had been around very many saints' shrines praying to be made whole by their illumination, for about eight years, then she groaned that she could never be cured. And perhaps divine providence gave heed to this, so that blessed Ivo might grant with greater glory something other saints had denied. Ivo's great and godly affection took pity on her sorrows, and at last gave her back the clear sight she had longed for. Therefore she was ordered in a dream to go on to the village of Slepe, to light up the home of blessed Ivo there. When she had set out according to the divine instruction, she poured out prayers and soon acquired her former eyesight. And now the new light made her more happy than her previous daily blindness had made her sad. For indeed delayed wishes are more happily received when granted, and things got with difficulty are held more dear. Moreover with her eyesight restored she set out with enormous joy and no one leading her, who had previously walked with such great grief and with another's guidance. And just as she had vowed, as long as she lived she remained in widowhood dedicated to God."

"A man from the neighbourhood was bent and twisted so that he walked on all-fours, as would be more appropriate for two very little foot-Stools. When this man had prevailed upon blessed Ivo in the place of his discovery, he was raised up, made whole, and turned into a biped. The brothers who were resident there in the saint's service offered him daily alms for a few days afterwards."

"In the same way a young boy from Hampshire, who had been crippled in his hands and feet from his mother s womb, was carried by his relations to the shrine of the martyr-king in Shaftesbury where he was straightened out as far as the hands were concerned. At St. Ivo's shrine, indeed, he was restored as to the other disability which remained, and walked on his own. When he Stretched out his loosened sinews while the brothers sang psalms, St. Ivo appeared to him as an

unknown man of remarkable dignity, who was eager to draw him towards him and to Straighten out the bend in his knees, while in the meantime the boy, who found it unbearable, protested at the severity of the pain. Then Standing on his feet and walking upright, and already giving thanks because he could go back to his family as himself, he encouraged everyone into divine praises.

"But yet one night when he had arranged to depart as a hired man according to an accepted agreement, or at least to escape the favour of learning which was perhaps urged on him, look what happened to him after Vespers! He was attacked by an unbearable weakness, and he began to fill the walls of the monastery with loud shouts. And when the brothers, who put it down to his sins, kept on prostrating themselves for him in the chapel, the boy got his health back there, all his torments flew away, and in the same place, where he was now to serve the saint, he was taken in as a scholar."

"We know an elderly monk of Ramsey, honoured and loved by all, whose name we shall keep quiet out of respect. Along with God's examining and His corrective scourge the name is bequeathed to the time of Satan (i.e. Judgement Day).

"The glory of the first martyr Stephen distinguishes the day following the Lord's birthday: this day the old monk fell ill and was put in a cell in the infirmary. About evening he began to rave, to gape horribly, to gnash his teeth, to attack the people there with bites. Everyone was upset and rushed in; the hostile patient's Strength was enormous; twenty men could hardly overcome him, and one body was not big enough for so many hands, so many hands could not be effective on one rebel. At last however he was subdued and, with his hands bound to his knees like a ball, he was knocked out with a crowbar. The pitying brothers blessed a large wine jar with water and put him in. The enemy's rage grew, detesting holy water more than fire. They hung round the monk's neck all sorts of religious charms, and the madness of the enemy was thereby increased rather than tamed and the devilish anger threw more graspings and attacks. In fact the man could not be set free there to wait for the power of remedy entrusted to blessed Ivo.

"At last, on the advice of the brothers, he was carried down into the church to the saints' shrine. And as they were making for the choir through the chapel of God's holy Mother, the man they were carrying began to sing out this Christmas song: 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; Lord God shine upon us.' One voice of a friend hurrying to him and suffering with him chimed in, 'O most holy guardians of this sacred cloister, come quickly to the aid of your servant's difficulties, and allow him no longer to be ruled by the enemy.' The well-wisher was checked by brotherly arms, just as if he were bound, in the presence of St. Ivo's health-giving memorial. Then indeed after he had hastily spoken, he took up the linen which had been placed upon the saint, and the cloak was ritually displayed more splendidly. The sick man shouted with unclouded mind and renewed health,

'I see you and I recognize you, most holy father Ivo, and now I pray to you with a sound mind that your holy intervention will bring me full health.'

"As he declared these things in a rational manner, and persisted with calm feelings, the brothers suddenly released him from his outer bonds with great promptness on all sides. The free man was praying devoutly, and doing everything sensibly, and he gave quite surely proof of his deliverance. Who in that place was then able to cease from God's praises, when such a sudden calm had been created from an enemy Storm? The sound of praise resounded through the whole church, and so did the offering of thanks from people blessing the Lord in His saint Ivo, and praising highly in great jubilation with hymns and cymbals. And so in this way, for the sake of our most delightful father, joy was restored more happily from this disturbance of the Lord's birthday."

"There was a youth whose parents' devotion had led them to entrust him to the abbot of Ramsey to be directed to share in the brothers' life. He detested the rather severe rule of monastic life and tried to run away overseas, namely to Flanders where the school was that he had come from some time before. While he was working on this he went for a walk one day in a garden near the church and suddenly an evil spirit took possession of him and excited him and he ran to and fro until in a frenzy he ran into a house which happened to be next to the garden. The family of the house of course wondered sadly at his sudden madness, and held him down there with great force to see if the spirit would leave him. Almost at midnight or thereabouts when he had already Started to get better, he saw two hideous men come towards him, who said to him, 'Because you want to run away from that place of yours, we have come here to carry you off with us to the cloisters of hell.' When he heard this he was roused and he sprang up and, once the doors of the house were opened, he flew swiftly to the monastery, shouting often 'Kyrie eleison'. The brothers were woken by these shouts, and they ordered him to be caught and taken to the infirmary and guarded till morning.

"When morning came he was distressed again. So the brothers ordered the priest to be sent for, and an exorcism for the calming of madness to be recited over him. But the exorcism could not be of any use, because the power of God wanted to demonstrate how great were the merits of blessed Ivo. So the suffering youth saw a person Standing near who looked to him like blessed Ivo, and the figure painted on him the sign of the cross and promised him health in the future. When he shouted this out with frenzied mouth to the brothers who were there they brought him all the way to the patron Ivo's health-giving tomb, where prayers were uttered for him and a potion given to him made up of a scraping from the tomb mixed with water, and in a very little while he was at peace, with his frenzy calmed. Then, with the demon put to flight, he was returned at the same time to a whole mind in a healthy body and got up. And having thus been punished he promised he would never leave the holy place to which he had been bound by his father's

presentation, and he took religious vows and joined the society of the brothers."

"A young man from Venice, of the rank of count on his father's and mother's sides, and from a very famous family, was inspired by the devil to kill his sister, who was pregnant. Oh, monstrous grief of his parents! They could not avenge their daughter on their son, and for one eye blinded tear out the one that was left-for one eye suffer the loss of two. The bishop bound the culprit with iron chains; he was tied up with iron from his shoulders to his kidneys; his Stomach and his arms were girdled with iron; and thus, handed over to Satan for the destruction of his body and the salvation of his soul he roved through hot and cold regions of the world in suffering and hardship.

"After a long exile, after various dangers, after visiting countless shrines of the saints, at last he sailed to Britain for the favour of English saints. At St. Dionysius of Paris just one chain fell off; the rest were kept for blessed Ivo to loosen. When at last he came to the monastery of our holy father Benedict he was weak to the point of death: we believe the holy doctor arranged this so that he might be cleansed from his crime through the furnace of illness and so might be given bodily health and absolution. (So the Lord relieved the punished paralytic from his former sins, and soon said to the cured man, 'Take up your bed and walk.')

"Therefore on the feast of St. Maurus, who is the shape and likeness of blessed father Benedict, in the evening, when this verse of the hymn of God's holy mother was being sung in canon, 'And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation,' the young man in chains who was praying at St. Ivo's tomb was suddenly seized by an invisible force, raised up completely from the ground, and then quite quickly put down. His iron bonds burst, not that they had been done up with a key, they had been made continuous. The chains themselves, once cast off, were scarcely to be found. Praise to the Lord, with songs and the ringing of bells, and with all the windows lit up, praise re-echoed in a loud voice of rejoicing! The miracle is correctly ascribed to blessed Ivo, with St Benedict and all the saints supporting him.

"This account is not enough to tell of the young man, rejoicing thus in his freedom and complete health: with what humility he dedicated himself to his holy liberator; what thanks he poured out to the abbot and brothers, very great because they had revived him when ill with such great kindness; and, when the abbot had given him clothing to suit his rank, how happy he returned to his own country.

"There was a rich and faithful man in this neighbourhood, Godric by name, who had friends and relations in for a festive gathering. The walls were bright with coloured tapestries, the ceilings and floors were green with garlands of leaves, the couches were adorned with hangings, the tables with banquets, and the house, full of people reclining at table, was a riot of purple and gold ornaments.

"His daughter, a girl as yet unmarried, was among the banqueters, and she was caught like a fish on a hook when she tried to swallow down a morsel of bread dissolved in her mouth. For by a hideous mischance a pin had slipped from a young servant's dress, and had been folded in and cooked when the bread was made. It stuck in the young girl's throat so that it did not move, and nothing was left untried in the way of devilish trickery; only the Lord could save her. There was a bitter and pitiable struggle which was of no use to remove the embedded barb or to make it go down. The rose of her cheeks fled, a white bloodless pallor took over, her dying eyes failed her as her sight grew dim. The inextricable pinpoint blocked the entrance of life; death stood in the wings. Troubled groans and faint sighs were borne away, and great anguish wrenched loud screams from her instead.

"The poor father rushed in; the mother hurried in, screeching that she was wretched to have been preserved to see this day. Then the table was carried out in loathing, the festivities turned into lamentation, the lute became silent, and all music was turned into grief. The idea of a banquet fell into ruin. The father was confused by a double sorrow: both for the mortal suffering of his most beloved daughter, and for the spoilt happiness of his guests. The mother wanted to enfold her dear child in her arms, to lean against her breast, to stroke her face and throat with a mother's hand, and by crushing her to comfort her in her alarm. But the girl, racked by internal pain as she was laid out for death on her bed, was afraid of it then because of a discussion among the Christians of her departing soul. Oh, nothing is more frail than human strength, nothing more destructible than man! Something so very small is big enough to be the difference between life and death! Thus stinging insects and gnats had conquered the Egypt of the Pharaohs, and likewise in Christian times had overthrown the innumerable chariots and horses of the king of Persia. But why do we hinder your decisions with many complaints, holy patron?

"So, amid all these dangers, one man, remembering about the very healing water of St. Ivo, was sent out on a swift horse, and a small draught of the holy water was brought back as fast as possible. Oh, excellent Lord, to whom nothing is incurable, who takes people down to hell and brings them back, and makes deep sorrow into joy! Suddenly when the girl drank the divine liquid the iron was dissolved and was extracted from the bottom of her throat; it came up and she had it all bloody in her mouth and spat it out. Then when people saw her as if revived from the dead, they shed as many tears of joy as they had before of sorrow, and everyone praised the Lord in His saint with suitable wonder.

"Not long afterwards the daughter returned to the feast, very healthy with a rosy face, and the rejoicing which had been interrupted returned to everyone with increased interest. With what joy they were able then to exclaim, 'Oh St. Ivo, very great priest of God, what may worthily be spread about as your advertisement, you who brought up iron against the downward flow and forced it to come out

and dissolve! May your glory bless the Lord of glory for ever!'

St. Ivo appeared to many people. Thus "a countryman of Bluntisham reported one of these apparitions to Abbot Eadnoth. He said that Ivo had often considered him worthy to appear to and be seen by, and that long ago, appearing with his customary grace, Ivo had said these things to him, 'I am Bishop Ivo. About five hundred years have now passed since I found rest in my memorial at Slepe.' Then when they heard this the brothers were curious and they read over the chronicles where they found it was the year 580 of our Lord's Incarnation, when the heavenly flower Gregory was in his prime as pope, he who sent Augustine, the morning star of the English, to those who were sitting in darkness. So about these times the blessed Ivo is supposed to have gone over to the Lord."

There was a Norwegian monk who was on duty at the shrine of St. Ivo at Ramsey who "lapsed into apathy about his salvation, and he neglected the honour and reverence which he owed to blessed Ivo, or which it was fitting to display. For quite often as he crossed in front of the holy body he did not bother to bend his knee nor even simply to bow slightly." St. Ivo appeared to him at night and reproached him, and had him beaten by one of his attendants. "When he told this to the brothers, his laziness abandoned, they became more careful of their own salvation and more devout towards God and St. Ivo. And so it happens that when one is reproached many may be improved."

Towards the end of the eleventh century, "a certain monk of the Ely community was in charge of an estate under the abbey's authority. He ordered the villagers to plough, to thresh or to get on with other jobs on the one day in the year when they had been accustomed to come to the memorial of blessed Ivo and his companions, that is Slepe church with sacrifices and gifts. One of their elders replied to him, 'Lord,' he said, 'on this day all our villagers, along with the rest in the countryside round about, are accustomed to seek with prayers and offerings the support of blessed Ivo and his companions with God for their own safety, for peace and the earth's fertility. Therefore they ask you to put off to another day the work you have ordered.' The monk, like Pharaoh refusing to release the sons of Israel from hard labours and to let them leave his land in order to sacrifice to their own God, replied angrily, 'Who is this Ivo, and where is his home, that you are eager to honour with such gifts? Who he might be I don't know, and I'm certainly not letting peasants take a holiday from their tasks and go off to him.'

"But St. Ivo in his usual way did not let an insult to him and his faithful people go unpunished. For when by chance the man who had denied him was passing through the village of Slepe, …and as the monk came in front of the church dedicated in honour of blessed Ivo himself and his companions, he was weighed down with heavy sleep and said to those travelling with him, 'I am too sleepy: until I have rested I can't ride any further.' And getting down from his horse, he went

to sleep beside the road, on the ground in the open air while the rest kept watch. And he saw in his dreams a man standing there, noble in stature, distinguished by his grey hair, magnificent in looks, dressed in snowy white, holding a belt in his hand and saying to him, 'Do you recognize me?' When the quaking monk replied that he did not know him, he said, 'I am Ivo, whom lately you said you did not know, and you forbade those who wanted to come to me. I have come just now to tell you who I am and where I stay.' And –pointing out the church to him from a distance he said, 'Look, my home and the place of my habitation.' He also gave him the belt which he was holding in his hand, saying, 'Wear this belt around you; and with this my token remember well from now on who I am.' And he encircled him with the belt and left.

"The monk soon woke up, breathing heavily and feeling as if he had been tied round with a very tight iron chain, and told everything which he had seen in his sleep to his companions. With their help and with great difficulty he was placed on a litter and taken all the way to the estate where he had planned to go previously. For he was racked inside by a gripping of his vitals; outside indeed he was tormented by a poisonous swelling of decaying skin: the flesh which the saint's belt had had covered was rotting away. And because he was afraid of ending his life tortured in this way, he called his friends and relations and confessed that he deserved to be punished with such an injury because he had sinned against St. Ivo, and he asked what task he might diligently perform in order to be made well. So they advised him to appease the saint's anger with prayers and gifts and to spend money on alms for the poor; also, over and above all this, to make a great wax taper, and send it along to St. Ivo's shrine for his health.

"When this had been done he gradually recovered and got back to his former well-being, and after his health returned he went devoutly to deliver thanks to the house of St. Ivo, whom he had formerly despised, and thenceforth he held him in not inconsiderable fear and love."

Again, "a certain foreign abbot, when he was on a journey nearby the place of the saints' discovery, heard news of the miracles done by them in that place and turned aside to the church to pray for their patronage. Then he also tasted the water of blessed Ivo's spring which flowed in the very same place where once his holy body had lain, and which supplied a health-giving drink to people ill with a fever, and he went on with the journey he had undertaken.

"One of his monks, holding it worthless and reckoning it a falsehood, said it was not fitting for a wise and devout man to support the silliness or superstition of country people who, deceived by heathen error, worshipped the waters and the bones of any old dead people; led astray by certain imagined supernatural deeds of devils, they honoured them as if they were relics of saints many times proved.

"He had not yet finished his words when he was suddenly seized by so great a weakness that he was scarcely able at long last to reach the place he was making for, that is Ramsey. There with a very severe illness he paid the penalty for his blasphemy, and after many prayers had been poured out before the body of blessed Ivo, because he had perhaps done wrong through ignorance, at last he was restored to health."

Again, "a certain slave, who had done something wrong and was terrified of an excessive beating from his furious master, fled for sanctuary to St. Ivo. His master pretended to make peace and forgave him for his wrong-doing, but not from his heart. For he nursed his anger inside him and not long afterwards he falsely accused the slave of a crime and satisfied his fury by cutting him with fearful lashes, and between lashes he reproached him saying, 'Take that one for Ivo; or if you like just run off to him again.'

"When he had said this, at the very same hour, he was struck down by a serious illness and took to his bed. Then when his survival seemed hopeless he summoned the slave boy to him and asked for his forgiveness. And having dressed him and presented him with his own clothing the master made peace with him, and sent him to the blessed Ivo to beg for forgiveness. When the slave had prayed to Ivo for him, the master recovered from his illness Straight away; and then he did not dare to inflict on the boy, who had now been given his freedom, any insult or annoyance, but from that time on he was keen to fear and honour the blessed Ivo, because he had personal experience of his Strength and power."

"Once, when a wild and ungovernable tribe of Britons were rushing everywhere and ravaging Huntingdonshire, the inhabitants of Slepe took their possessions into the church of St. Ivo and entrusted them to the saint. When the wolfish greed of the raiders got to know of this they hurried there in ferocious spirits, broke down the church doors and carried off everything that had been put there for safekeeping. But then one of them, looking about, saw a pair of bells hanging from the beams in the church roof. And coveting them he climbed up to take them for himself. Just when he put out his hands to take them down, he suddenly slipped and fell to the ground. All his limbs being broken, he died. When the rest saw this they were seized by a great terror let something similar happen to them, and realizing the holiness of the place, and paying tribute to God and St. Ivo, they brought back humbly all the things they had arrogantly taken away."

Again, "in Stanton, a village very close to Slepe, there was a young man by the name of Alwold, who is thought to be still living. He came once to this same town of Slepe with a devout crowd who were flocking to the miracle-working tomb of blessed Ivo. He was not seeking health but faithfully seeking faithlessly to mock. The Stupid boy did not know that God is not mocked but rather the person who is pleased to mock.

"He put a snow-white hen on the holy altar, not as an offering but to stir up peasant gossip, as if she would settle there to hatch eggs. The boy was standing on his left leg and he bent his right at the joint onto his thigh, and shouted this in joking insolence: 'Hey you, St. Ivo, do you see that I am brought here stunted by illness? Why don't you put me onto the road to recovery?' He talked thus because he wanted to put down his leg and foot in the usual position and raise a laugh from the people by saying 'Look! You see a miracle, how your saint has cured me?' But in complete accordance with God's justice his pretended illness was made very real; for as he had bent, so he stayed for ever curved back stiffly. Then he believed indeed from true experience, and from true necessity; he demanded with deep groans what he had previously pretended did not exist - that the saint's holy power should restore him, now he had thoroughly learnt his lesson, to his former Strength."

"One evening some people of Slepe and others from the adjoining countryside, when they were lingering agreeably over supper and drinks well into the night, suddenly saw a very bright light in the red sky; they went out to investigate such a great omen, and saw flashing pillars of golden light piercing the sky from the tomb of blessed Ivo and his companions and illuminating the outlines of things far and wide. . . Therefore while they were gaping there at the celestial light, some of the bolder ones rashly hurried to that place of the light, but as they arrived it disappeared like a lamp in darkness."

Again, "a huge extent of light was often seen openly across the sky, that is from the church at Ramsey all the way to the memorial at Slepe, which here swelled up, there sank down. There were also faithful souls in abundance who testified that they had clearly seen our heavenly leader himself, with a numerous host dressed in white, and he had revisited one or other of his places by way of a Starry road, itself sparkling brightly with glittering ornaments. Generally, none the less, it was seen in broad daylight, a great procession of clergy and people following, all dressed in white, around the chapel at Slepe, and many candlesticks, and censers, and crosses, and shining banners were carried, which all proclaimed the supreme merits of the very famous Ivo."

St. Ivo is commemorated on April 24.

Holy Father Ivo, pray to God for us!

(Sources: Goscelin, *Vita S. Yvonis, P.L.* 154, 84ff; S.D. Edgington, *The Life and Miracles of St. Ivo*, St. Ives, Cambs.: Friends of the Norris Museum, 1985; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, IV, 181; G.H. Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, Felinfach: Llanerch Publishers, 1997, pp. 43-52; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1978, p. 206; Nick Mayhew Smith, *Britain's*

Holiest Places, Bristol: Lifestyle Press, 2011, p. 108)

APPENDIX ONE. RIGHTEOUS ALFRED THE GREAT, KING OF ENGLAND

The ninth century was a very low point in the history of the Western Orthodox Church. The century had begun in spectacular fashion: on Christmas Day, 800 Charlemagne, who ruled a vast territory comprising most of Western Europe, had been anointed "Emperor of the Romans" by Pope Leo III. So was this the rebirth of Christian Rome in the West?

It was not to be. Refused recognition by the Eastern Roman Empire, and plagued by heresy (the Filioque, rejection of the Seventh Ecumenical Council), as well as by Viking and Saracen invaders, the empire began to disintegrate soon after Charlemagne's death. By the early tenth century a new social and political system, feudalism, had established itself in France, and would soon be established also in Germany and Italy, while the papacy was plunged into an abyss of immorality, "the pornocracy of Marozia".

However, by the end of the ninth century one nation in the West was recovering and even building the foundations of a truly Orthodox kingdom that was to survive and flourish until its violent overthrow in 1066: England. This was the achievement largely of one man and his ecclesiastical advisors: King Alfred the Great. Let us look at the main stages of his extraordinary life.

The Roman Consul

Alfred was born in 849, the fifth son of King Aethelwulf of Wessex, one of the traditional "heptarchy", or seven kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxons. Wessex comprised most of southern England south of the Thames (but not including London), and its capital was the old Roman town of Winchester. A very pious man, King Aethelwulf gave one tenth of his dominions to the Church and made several pilgrimages to Rome.

On one of them, in the year 853, he took his youngest son Alfred, together with Alfred's tutor, St. Swithun, Bishop of Winchester. "At this time," writes Alfred's earliest biographer, his friend the Welsh Bishop Asser, "the lord Pope Leo [IV] was ruling the apostolic see. He anointed the child Alfred as king, ordaining him properly, received him as an adoptive son and confirmed him." This extraordinary event could be dismissed as fiction – and has been so dismissed by many historians – if it were not confirmed by a letter written in the same year by the Pope himself to King Aethelwulf: "We have now graciously received your son Alfred, whom you were anxious to send at this time to the threshold of the Holy Apostles, and we have decorated him, as a spiritual son, with the dignity of the belt and vestments of the consulate, as is customary with Roman consuls, because he gave himself into our hands."

Roman consul? This was surely an archaism – although in 754 Pope Stephen IV had

given the title of patricius to Pippin, King of the Franks, as a sign that the Franks, and not the Byzantines, were now his secular protectors. Adoption as his spiritual son and godson? It was possible. Anointing to the kingdom? This was unusual but a certain precedent existed for it in that both Charlemagne and King Offa of Mercia had had their sons associated with themselves in the kingship by Pope Hadrian. But the honour accorded to Alfred seems to have been greater than that – and more surprising in that Alfred had four older brothers who would be expected to ascend the throne before him!

The only explanation of the Pope's extraordinary action, according to the twelfth-century writer Aelred of Rievaulx, was that Pope Leo was a prophet and foresaw the future greatness of Alfred. Certainly, if the pope foresaw Alfred's greatness, it made sense for him to tie his destiny as closely as possible with the city of Rome and the papacy. For that same prophetic gift would have told him that the Carolingian empire with which the papacy was officially linked would soon collapse, and so the future of Roman Christian civilization depended on reviving the already close links between the papacy and "the land of the angels", as Pope Gregory I had called England.

The Wild Boar

On his return from a second pilgrimage to Rome with Alfred, in 856, King Aethelwulf found that his eldest son, Aethelbald, had seized the kingdom and divided it between himself and his brother Aethelbert. However, in 860 Aethelbald died, and Aethelbert reunited the kingdom under his single rule. But in the same year the Vikings sacked Winchester and St. Swithun, the protector of the kingdom and Alfred's tutor, died. In 865 Aethelbert also died, and Aethelred came to the throne. He had to face a renewed threat from the Vikings, who in 866 invaded the northern kingdom of Northumbria, which was divided by civil war between two English kings. The Danes conquered the Northumbrian capital of York, killed both kings in a particularly cruel manner and then installed a puppet-king of English nationality in their place. In 869, supplemented by reinforcements from overseas, the Danes assembled their greatest army yet and invaded East Anglia, conquering it after a bitter and bloody struggle against the Holy Martyr-King Edmund.

The next year the Vikings crossed the Thames and defeated King Aethelred and his brother Prince Alfred at Reading. However, on January 8, 871 the two brothers met the Vikings at Ashdown and won a famous victory – the first major setback for the Vikings in England. The manner of the victory was significant. Prince Alfred and his men took up position blocking the Viking advance. However, King Aethelred would not join him at first because he was attending the Divine Liturgy in his tent, and said that he would not fight until the liturgy was completed. Alfred had no choice but to begin the battle without his brother and when he was not yet in position. He charged *uphill* at the pagans "like a wild boar". They retreated, and when King Aethelred joined his brother the retreat turned into a rout. The Vikings lost thousands of men,

and were driven all the way back to their camp at Reading.

However, on March 22 another battle took place at Meretun at which King Aethelred was severely wounded. On St. George's day, April 23, 871, he died, and at the tender age of twenty-one, after the deaths of all four of his brothers, Alfred was king of Wessex. As the holy pope had foreseen, he was now in the position of a Roman consul, commanding the last significant army standing in the way of the complete triumph of the pagan Vikings over Christian England.

But things did not go well at first. In his first battle as king Alfred lost to the Vikings at Wilton. Four years of peace ensued, during which the Vikings consolidated their control over northern and central England, placing puppet kings in Northumbria and Mercia (Central England). In 874, King Burhred of Mercia fled to Rome with his wife, Alfred's sister, and died there as a monk.

Sometimes King Alfred would visit his spiritual father, St. Neot, asking for his blessing. There is some evidence that the king was in conflict with Archbishop Aethelred of Canterbury at this time - there exists a letter dated to 877 from the archbishop to Pope John VIII complaining about the king. It may be in this connection that St. Neot severely criticised the king for his proud harshness, bringing before him the humility of David as an example, and pointing out that Saul, who had been placed at the head of the tribes of Israel when he was small in his own eyes, was later condemned for his pride. Then he prophesied that the barbarians would invade the land and triumph by God's permission, and he would be the only one to escape, wandering as a fugitive over the land. "O King," he said, "you will suffer much in this life; no man can say how much you will suffer. But now, beloved child, hear me if you are willing, and turn your heart to my counsel. Forsake your wickedness; redeem your sins by almsgiving, and wipe them out through tears." And he urged him, when he would see his words fulfilled, not to despair, but to act like a man and strengthen his heart. For through his intercessions he had obtained from God that Alfred would again be restored to his former prosperity, so long as he ceased from doing evil and repented of his sins. And he further urged him to send gifts to the Pope, beseeching him to give freedom to the English School in Rome. This good deed would help him in his troubles. Alfred then sent the Pope as he had been advised, and obtained his request, together with several holy relics and a portion of the True Cross.

In 876, the Vikings resumed their offensive. Their new leader Guthrum rode from Cambridge to Wareham, deep inside Alfred's kingdom. A Viking fleet was very near, and the combination of the army in Wareham and the fleet at sea presented a mortal threat to King Alfred. By God's Providence the fleet was completely destroyed in a storm. However, being unable to defeat the land army under Guthrum, Alfred was forced to make peace with him. According to the agreement, Guthrum was supposed to leave Wessex, but instead, under cover of night, he established himself within the Roman walls of the city of Exeter. Alfred pursued him, and the two sides again made

peace, exchanging hostages. On July 31 St. Neot died, and almost immediately, in August, Guthrum retreated north of the Thames into Viking-dominated territory at Gloucester. The threat had passed – for the time being…

The Guerrilla King

King Alfred celebrated Christmas, 877 at his royal villa at Chippenham in Wiltshire. On Twelfth Night, January 6, traditionally the climax of the festivities, Guthrum made a sudden surprise attack on Alfred and forced him to flee to the west. After Pascha (March 23), Alfred and a few men arrived at a small island surrounded by marshes called Athelney, near Glastonbury, the place where St. Joseph of Arimathaea had first preached the Gospel in apostolic times. The island was 9,500 square metres in size – the full extent of Orthodox England controlled by the king at this, the lowest point in English Orthodox history.

Although the main sources for Alfred's reign – Bishop Asser's *Life* and *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* – make no direct mention of this, there is strong evidence that Alfred was betrayed - perhaps by his nephew Aethelwold, who joined the Danes after his death, more probably by the ealdorman (provincial governor) of Wiltshire, Wulfhere. Guthrum and the English traitors probably planned either to kill Alfred or force him to flee abroad, making way for an English puppet-king for Wessex on the model of the puppet-kings already installed in Northumbria and Mercia. But Alfred refused to flee the country as his brother-in-law King Burhred of Mercia had done – and this decision probably saved English Orthodox civilization. For as long as Alfred was alive no puppet-king could be installed in Wessex and the Vikings' position remained precarious.

However, his situation was still desperate. Alfred, writes Bishop Asser, "had nothing to live on except what he could forage by frequent raids, either secretly or even openly, from the Vikings as well as from the Christians who had submitted to the Vikings' authority." One day, the king was asked for alms by a poor beggar. He gave him some of the little he possessed. That night, the beggar appeared to him in a dream and revealed that he was the famous St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne (the greatest of the English saints, whose incorrupt relics were at that moment being carried by monks around the North of England to escape the marauding Vikings). He then told the king that God would now have mercy on England after the great suffering she had undergone because of her sins, and that Alfred himself would regain his kingdom. As a sign of the truth of his words, the saint said, the next morning Alfred's fishermen would bring in an enormous catch of fish, which would be the more miraculous because of the extreme coldness of the weather. When Alfred awoke, he discovered that his mother had had exactly the same vision; and at the same time his men came in to announce that they had made an enormous catch of fish. Soon the rest of the vision was fulfilled…

Encouraged by this, the king decided on some daring reconnaissance work. With one faithful follower, he gained admittance to the Danish camp as a singing actor, and there was able to find out everything he needed to know before returning to Athelney. Then, as winter turned into spring, Alfred was joined by Ealdorman Aethelnoth of Somerset and a small force.

It was in this period that St. Neot appeared to the king in his misery one night, and told him that he would triumph over the enemy in the seventh week after Pascha, and that the Danish King Guthrum and his nobles would be baptized. And so, in the seventh week after Pascha Alfred rode to a secret meeting place called Egbert's stone, and there, writes Bishop Asser, "all the inhabitants of Somerset and Wiltshire and all the inhabitants of Hampshire – those who had not sailed overseas for fear of the Vikings – joined up with him. When they saw the king,… they were filled with immense joy." Then, on the night before the battle of Edington, in the village of Iley, St. Neot again appeared to the king. He looked like an angel, his hair white as snow, his garments glistening and fragrant. "Arise quickly," he said, "and prepare for victory. When you came here, I was with you, I helped you. So now you and your men go out to battle tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, Who gives victory to kings. And I will go before you to the battle, and your enemies shall fall by your arm before my eyes, and you will smite them with the edge of the sword."

The next morning, during the battle, an invisible hand seized Alfred's standard and waved the English on. The Danes were so overwhelmed that they agreed to leave Wessex forever, while Guthrum and thirty of his leading men agreed to be baptized. This time the Danes kept their promises, Alfred received his greatest enemy from the baptismal font, and for twelve days the Danes remained with Alfred and enjoyed his very generous hospitality. Guthrum and his men then moved to East Anglia and settled there permanently.

In 885 a Viking fleet appeared on the Thames. Alfred saw this as a violation of his agreement with Guthrum and seized London from the Vikings. Then, according to Asser, "all the Angles and Saxons – those who had formerly been scattered everywhere and were not in captivity with the Vikings – turned willingly to Alfred and submitted to his lordship."

Seizing the opportunity, Alfred now drew up a permanent treaty with King Guthrum. The English and Danish kings divided England between them: most of the north and east became the "Danelaw", the administration of the Danes, while the English kept the south and the west (except Cornwall, which was a Celtic kingdom). Soon the Danish settlers in England were becoming Orthodox Christians in large numbers. Thus in East Anglia, early in the tenth century, the Christianized Danes were issuing coins commemorating the Martyr-King Edmund, whom they themselves had killed only a few years before! Again, by the middle of the tenth century the son of a

warrior in the Great Army, St. Odo, had become archbishop of Canterbury, while later in the century another Dane, Osketyl, became archbishop of York. The foundation of this remarkable reconciliation of the two warring races in Christ was laid by the courage, generosity and statesmanship of King Alfred…

The All-English Kingdom

King Alfred was even greater in peace than he was in war. Determined that he should never again be caught out and outmanoeuvred by the rapid strikes of the Danes, he made three important innovations in the sphere of military organization that proved to be very important when war with the Vikings resumed in the 890s. Although the Vikings were not decisively defeated then, they gave up their attempts to conquer England for another one hundred years.

Alfred's first innovation was the building of a fleet in order to meet and destroy the marauding pagans before they ever set foot on English soil. Alfred even ordered the construction of a long-ship according to his own design. This was the first permanent fleet that any British ruler had constructed since the fourth-century Romans, who had built a fleet to protect the island against – the pagan Anglo-Saxons.

Secondly, he went part of the way to creating a standing army, "dividing his army in two, so that always half its men were at home, half out on service, except for those men who were to garrison the burhs".

The burhs, or new towns, were Alfred's third and most original innovation: he constructed, or reconstructed, thirty of them at equal intervals throughout Wessex so that no Englishman working in the fields was more than twenty miles from a burh, to which he could flee in time of Viking invasion. The burhs were laid out in rectilinear street plans designed to facilitate the movement of soldiers. They were protected by massive earthworks, and Alfred appointed 27,000 soldiers to man their walls. The local landowners were required to provide four men to man each "pole" of wall (5.5. metres). The towns were also designed as centres of trade, so the predominantly rural civilization of Anglo-Saxon England was soon acquiring an urban "middle class".

The only real city in England before this had been London, which was now relocated within the walls of the old Roman town by Alfred and extensively rebuilt. This Romanizing tendency was also revealed in the coins he minted in London, which, as Hindley points out, "show 'design elements deliberately and carefully copied' from Roman models". In his London coins Alfred calls himself "king of the English" rather than "king of Wessex"; and, sensitive to the Londoners' feelings, he appointed a Mercian, not a Wessex man, as ealdorman of the city and gave him his daughter in marriage.

Alfred's policy towards London was a part of his wider policy of abolishing the

regional differences and rivalries among the Anglo-Saxons and creating a genuinely all-English kingdom. Conscious that the divisions among the Anglo-Saxons had been at least partly to blame for their near-conquest by the Vikings, he deliberately tried to promote Englishmen from north of the Thames, especially in Church appointments. He was also very generous towards the Celts, who had only recently returned from a century-long schism from the Orthodox Church because of their hatred of the English. Thus the Celtic Bishop Asser moved to England as Bishop of Sherborne and became his main counsellor and biographer, and by the end of his reign all the South Welsh kingdoms had submitted freely to his rule.

This policy of national reconciliation and unification was continued by Alfred's son, Edward the Elder, who annexed Danish (Eastern) Mercia, and his grandson, Athelstan, who absorbed Cornwall, North Wales and much of Northern England. These gains were not always made without war, but the battles were against Celts and Vikings, not against other Englishmen. Thus in 937, at the battle of Brunanburgh in north-west England – "the great, lamentable and horrible battle", as *The Annals of Ulster* described it – King Athelstan completely routed a formidable coalition between Olaf, the Viking king of Dublin, and Constantine, the king of the Scots, after which he appropriated to himself the Byzantine titles of basileus and curagulus of the whole of Britain…

The Lover of Wisdom

An important aspect of Alfred's unification policy was his codification of law. His *Lawbook* of 893 acknowledges his debt to the law-codes of earlier kings of Wessex, Kent and Mercia, and he seems to have intended it to cover, not only Wessex, but also Kent and English (Western) Mercia. Alfred himself travelled round the kingdom checking on the activities of his judges, and if he discovered that they had committed some injustice he imposed on them an original penance – further education. Bishop Asser recounts his words: "'I am astonished at this arrogance of yours, since through God's authority and my own you have enjoyed the office and status of wise men, yet you have neglected the study and application of wisdom. For that reason I command you either to relinquish immediately the offices of worldly power that you possess, or else to apply yourselves much more attentively to the pursuit of wisdom.' Having heard these words, the ealdormen and reeves were terrified and chastened as if by the greatest of punishments, and they strove with every effort to apply themselves to learning what is just…"

Alfred's attitude to wisdom was both mystical and intensely practical. The most famous relic of his reign, the Alfred Jewel, portrays a figure in cloisonné enamel that has been interpreted to represent the Wisdom of God. Again, when Alfred translated Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy,* he recast the work as a dialogue between the inquirer's mind and Wisdom personified. And he added passages of his own composition which revealed both his devotion to wisdom as the key virtue, and his

own conception of kingship. For example: "Look, Wisdom, you know that desire for and possession of earthly power never pleased me overmuch, and that I did not unduly desire this earthly rule, but that nevertheless I wished for tools and resources for the task that I was commanded to accomplish, which was that I should virtuously and worthily guide and direct the authority which was entrusted to me. You know of course that no one can make known any skill, nor direct and guide any authority, without tools and resources; a man cannot work on any enterprise without resources. In the case of the king, the resources and tools with which to rule are that he have his land fully manned: he must have praying me, fighting men and working men. You know also that without these tools no king may make his ability known. Another aspect of his resources is that he must have the means of support for his tools, the three classes of men. These, then, are their means of support: land to live on, gifts, weapons, food, ale, clothing, and whatever else is necessary for each of the three classes of men. Without these things he cannot maintain the tools, nor without the tools can he accomplish any of the things he was commanded to do. Accordingly, I sought the resources with which to exercise the authority, in order that my skills and power would not be forgotten and concealed: because every skill and every authority is soon obsolete and passed over, if it is without wisdom; because no man may bring to bear any skill without wisdom…"

"From the cradle onwards," wrote Bishop Asser, "in spite of all the demands of the present life, it has been the desire for wisdom, more than anything else, together with the nobility of his birth, which have characterized the nature of his noble mind." But the bishop criticized his parents for not teaching the young Alfred to read until he was twelve. Nevertheless, he was a good listener, and memorized English poems recited by others. And then one day his mother his mother offered to give a beautifully embroidered book of English poetry to whichever of her five sons would learn it fastest. Alfred won the contest…

Having defeated the Danes, King Alfred not only indulged his passion for book learning, but decided to educate the whole of his kingdom. He lamented that England, which had once been famed for her literary culture (especially Northumbria, the home of the Venerable Bede and of Alcuin, Charlemagne's "minister of education"), was now largely illiterate in Latin as a result of the Viking devastations. So he invited the last few learned men of the land to his court, and together with them and foreign imports such as the Frankish St. Grimbald, who founded a monastery in Winchester, he began an astonishingly ambitious programme of translation and copying.

Alfred did not at first know Latin, but having learned "by divine inspiration", according to Asser, both to read Latin and translate it into English "on one and the same day", he set about translating the following books which he judged to be "the most necessary for all men to know": St. Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care*, Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, St. Augustine's *Soliloquies* and the first fifty psalms of David. Moreover, several other works, including St. Gregory's *Dialogues* and the Venerable

Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* were translated by others at his initiative. In addition, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and an *Old English Martyrology* containing the lives of about two hundred saints were probably started in King Alfred's reign. Nor did King Alfred neglect the physical well-being of his subjects: a book containing cures for eighty-eight illnesses (listed in order from head to foot) was composed in his reign, and Alfred sent the second part of this work to Patriarch Elias of Jerusalem (together with alms for the Church of Jerusalem and "the monks of India").

Alfred sent his translations, together with prefaces written by himself, to the leading bishops of his kingdom, asking them to make further copies. In this way a strong vernacular tradition of sacred and secular literature grew up in England which continued to flourish into the tenth and eleventh centuries. This Anglo-Saxon vernacular tradition was unique in Western Europe in the Orthodox period, but was destroyed by the Roman Catholic Church after the Norman Conquest.

Alfred the Man

King Alfred's astonishingly broad range of achievements was accomplished in the face of enormous difficulties: enemies from without, inertia from within his kingdom, and extremely painful illnesses. As a youth, Alfred prayed to God for an illness that would help him suppress his carnal desires, and contracted piles. Later, during a visit to the shrine of St. Guerir (or Gwinear?) of Cornwall, he asked God to replace the piles with a less severe illness that would not be outwardly visible. The piles disappeared, and then on his wedding day, in 868, he was suddenly struck by a new and mysterious illness which lasted until his forty-fifth year. "And if at any time through God's mercy," writes Bishop Asser, "that illness abated for the space of a day or a night or even of an hour, his fear and horror of that accursed pain would never desert him, but rendered him virtually useless – as it seemed to him – for heavenly and worldly affairs."

In spite of all this, continues the bishop, the king "did not refrain from directing the government of the kingdom; pursuing all manner of hunting; giving instruction to all his goldsmiths and craftsmen as well as to his falconers, hawk-trainers and dog-keepers; making to his own design wonderful and precious new treasures which far surpassed any tradition of his predecessors; reading aloud from books in English and above all learning English poems by heart; issuing orders to his followers: all these things he did himself with great application to the best of his abilities. He was also in the invariable habit of listening daily to divine services and the Liturgy, and of participating in certain psalms and prayers and in the day-time and night-time offices, and, at night-time,.. of going (without his household knowing) to various churches in order to pray. He similarly applied himself attentively to charity and distribution of alms to the native population and to foreign visitors of all races, showing immense and incomparable kindness and generosity to all men, as well as to the investigation of things unknown. Wherefore many Franks, Frisians, Gauls, Vikings, Welshmen,

Irishmen and Bretons subjected themselves willingly to his lordship, nobles and commoners alike; and, as befitted his royal status, he ruled, loved, honoured and enriched them all with wealth and authority, just as he did his own people. He was also in the habit of listening eagerly and attentively to Holy Scripture being read out by his own countrymen, or even, if the situation should somehow arise, of listening to these lessons in the company of foreigners. With wonderful affection he cherished his bishops and the entire clergy, his ealdormen and nobles, his officials as well as all his associates. Nor, in the midst of other affairs, did he cease from personally giving, by day and night, instruction to all in virtuous behaviour and tutelage in literacy to their sons, who were being brought up in the royal household and whom he loved no less than his own children."

Perhaps the only field in which King Alfred fell behind the achievements of other kings was in the founding of monasteries: he founded only two, a men's monastery at Athelney, and a women's monastery at Shaftesbury, whose first abbess was his daughter Aethelgifu. However, by his educational work, which was directed above all for the benefit of the Church, he made possible the great monastic revival of the tenth century. And if a man can be judged by his descendants, then he must be judged very highly; for his descendants in the tenth and eleventh centuries comprise one of the most distinguished dynasties in Orthodox history, with several canonized saints (the nuns Elgiva, Edburga and Edith, and Kings Edgar, Edward the Martyr and Edward the Confessor).

Conclusion

King Alfred reposed in peace on October 26, 899. The great nineteenth-century historian of the Norman Conquest, Edward Augustus Freeman, called Alfred "the most perfect character in history". That may have been an exaggeration, but in Western Orthodox history, only King Alfred and Charlemagne among rulers have been accorded the title "the Great", and Alfred deserves the title much more than the heretical Charlemagne. Thoroughly Orthodox in faith (the Filioque found no place in English churches in his reign), Alfred accomplished more, in more directions, and in the face of greater difficulties, than any other ruler of the so-called "Dark Ages". Unlike Charlemagne, he did not quarrel with the Orthodox Church in the East, but asked for the prayers of the Eastern Patriarchs. And if his kingdom was smaller and humbler than Charlemagne's, it lasted longer and produced more fruit… He saved English Orthodox civilization for another two hundred years.

So why, ask some contemporary English Orthodox, has Alfred never been counted among the saints? Perhaps because it is not known that his relics were incorrupt (they may have been found recently, together with those of his wife and daughter, in Winchester), nor that he worked miracles after his death. And yet his life was itself a continuous miracle, combining the courage and humility of David with the wisdom and justice of Solomon…

In any case, we can agree with his descendant, the tenth-century chronicler Aethelweard, who described him as "the unshakeable pillar of the western people, a man full of justice, vigorous in warfare, learned in speech, above all instructed in Divine learning… Now, O reader, say 'O Christ our Redeemer, save his soul!"

APPENDIX TWO. SAINT COLUMBA OF IONA AND THE SAINTS OF IONA

Ireland, the island of the saints, is full of holy and wonderful men.

Marianus Scotus, Chronicle for the year 589.

Columba was a perfect sage, believing in Christ, learned and chaste and charitable; He was noble, he was gentle, the physician of the heart of every sage, a shelter to the naked, a consolation to the poor: there went not from the world one who was more

constant in the remembrance of the Cross.

Dallan Forghaill, Amhra Columcille (6th-7th century).

Foreword

St. Adomnan's *Life of St. Columba* (best known in Reeves' translation of 1874, to be found in full at http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T201040/index.html) has long been recognized as one of the great glories of Western Orthodox literature, and its subject as perhaps the greatest saint of Northern Britain, the real founder both of the Scottish State and of the Scottish Church. Indeed, the extinguishing of the last traditions of British Orthodoxy may be ascribed to the year 1204, when the last English Orthodox warriors perished fighting the western crusaders on the walls of Constantinople, and the last Scottish Columban monks were removed from the sacred ground of Columba's most famous monastic foundation, the sacred island of Iona. It is fitting, therefore, for the present generation of British Orthodox, who are striving to resurrect the traditions of Orthodoxy in our native land, to draw inspiration from the *Life* of this brightest light of the North, who prophesied the return of Orthodoxy to Iona before the end of the world.

The present work aims to integrate Adomnan's *Life* (which I shall refer to by the letter "A") with the other *Lives* and sources for the life of St. Columba that we possess, together with the results of recent research into Celtic Christianity and the information we have concerning the later Orthodox saints who continued the Columban traditions and may be said to have been part of his "family": the Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English Church and People* (early 8th c.) (B), the earliest *Life of St. Columba* by Cummineus Albus, Abbot of Iona (mid 7th c.) (C), the Old Irish *Life of Columba* (I), the *Life of St. Blaithmaic* by Walafridus Strabo (c. 845) (W), the *Annals of Ulster*, the *Annals of Innisfarne* the *Martyrology of Tallaght*, William of Malmesbury's *Early History of Glastonbury* and *Gesta Regum Anglorum* and Jocelyn's *Life of St. Kentigern of Glasgow* (12th c.) (K). I have also used many modern sources, of which I should particularly like to mention Haddan and Stubbs' *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Northern Ireland* (volume II, 1873, 1964), *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (E), Bellesheim's *History of the Catholic Church of Scotland* (volume I, 1887) (H), Lucy Menzies' *Saint Columba of Iona* (1920) (M), John Marsden's *The Fury of the Northmen* (1996) (N), Fr. Gregory Telepneff's *The Egyptian Desert in the Irish Bogs* (1998) (T), Elizabeth Rees' *Celtic Saints: Passionate Wanderers* (2000) (R), David Farmer's *Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (1978) (F) and Nick Mayhew Smith's *Britain's Holiest Places* (2011) (S). I also acknowledge the help provided by the websites

http://www.nireland.com/orthodox/Saints.htm,
http://users.erols.com/saintpat/ss/ss-index.htm,
http://www.orthodoxireland.com/saints,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%BAnchad_mac_Cinn_F%C3%A1elad.

It is not always easy to distinguish fact from legend in the very abundant material concerning St. Columba. I have therefore relied most heavily on the earliest *Lives* and Chronicles, which can be assumed to be the most authentic and Orthodox. However, I have dipped into the later *Lives*, especially that of Manus O'Donnell (1532) (D),

where it seems to me that they provide reliable information about important events in the life of the saint which were overlooked or only cursorily treated in the earlier sources – for example, the Battle of Culdreimhne and the Synod of Telltown, – perhaps because they portrayed the saint acting in ways that do not fit easily into the conventional pattern of sanctity. Nevertheless, I have felt it essential to include these episodes, which show that even the saints had to overcome quickness of temper and other frailties on their way to deification and eternal glory.

May St. Columba and all the saints of the Columban tradition pray for us to the Almighty God, that the prophecies concerning the return of Orthodoxy to the British land may be speedily fulfilled!

Early Years

Our holy Father Columba was born on Thursday, December 7, 521 near Gartan Lough, county Donegal, Ireland. On the side of his father, Phelim MacFergus, a chieftain of the Northern Ui Neill clan, he was descended from King Niall "of the nine hostages", who had reigned as High King of Ireland in the later fourth century (the nine hostages were the kings' sons he compelled the other powerful clans to give him as hostages). On the side of his mother, Ethna (Eithne), he was descended from Cathair Mor, King of Leinster. His grandmother, Erca, daughter of King Erc, was a sister of Fergus Mor, who led a colony of Irishmen from Dalriada in Ireland to Argyll in Scotland at the end of the fifth century, thus laying the foundations of the Irish colony in Scotland which became known as Dalriada. Columba, therefore, could have become a king if he had not become a monk. As an angel once revealed to his friend, St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise: "What you have surrendered for the love of God is nothing but the tools of your father's trade; what Columba has foregone is the scepter of Ireland, his by ancestral right." (D)

Columba's birth was prophesied by several holy men and women, such as St. Brigid and St. Patrick, who prophesied of the Niall clan:

A man child shall be born of his family,
He will be a sage, a prophet, a poet,
A loveable lamp, pure, clear,
Who will not utter falsehoods.
He will be a sage, he will be pious,
He will be the King of the royal graces,
He will be lasting and will ever be good,
He will be in the eternal Kingdom for his consolation.

St. Patrick's disciple, St. Mochta (Maucta), Bishop of Louth, said: "In the last ages a son shall be born whose name Columba shall be announced in every province of the isles and shall brilliantly enlighten the last ages of the earth. The little fields of our two monasteries shall be separated by the space of one little hedge; a man very dear to God and of great merit in His sight." (A)

Eithne was sleeping on a stone beside Gartan Lough before her son was born, an angel appeared to her, "and, standing beside her, brought her a certain mantle of marvelous beauty, in which lovely colours of all the flowers seemed to be depicted. After a while he asked for it back, and took it from her hands, and raising and spreading it out, sent it forth into the empty air. She was saddened by its removal and said to the venerable-looking man: 'Why are you taking this lovely mantle away from me?' He immediately replied: 'Because this mantle belongs to someone of such greatness and honour that you cannot keep it with you.' After these words, the woman saw the mantle gradually receding from her in its flight, and increasing in size until it was wider than the plains and higher than the mountains and forests, reaching from the Inishmore island off the west coast of Ireland to the north-east coast of Scotland.

Then she heard the voice: “Do not sorrow, woman, for you will bring forth to the man to whom you are joined in marriage a son so illustrious that he will be reckoned as one of the prophets of God and will lead innumerable souls to the Heavenly Country. As she was listening to this voice, the woman awoke.” (A, C)

The child was baptized with the name Columba, which means “dove” in Latin, but there is a tradition that he was given another name, Crimthann (or Crimthainn), meaning “wolf”. Later, the suffix Cille, meaning “of the cell” or “of the church”, was added to his name, making “Columkille”, “dove of the cells”, because as a boy “he often cam e out from the cell in which he read the Psalms to meet the children of the neighbourhood. And they would say: ‘Has our little Colum come today from the cell in Tir-Lughdech in Cinell Conaill?’” (I)

The baptism took place at Temple Douglas, between Letterkenny and Gartan, and was performed by his foster-father Cruithnechan, a priest of admirable life. It seems that Columba had one brother, Eoghan, and three sisters, but that at an early age he was sent to be the foster-child of Cruithnechan. This was commonly done in Ireland at the time; the foster- father would receive land or cows in exchange for looking after the child. Columba went to Cruitnechan because he was destined for the Church. (M)

Cruithnechan prepared boys for the monastic schools which were such a striking feature of Orthodox Ireland. His school was at Dore-Eithne, which lay in a beautiful valley beside the mountain stream known as the Leanen. St. Angus the Culdee writes in his *Martyrology* that Columba “from his tenderest years cherished the most ardent love of Christ”. This is shown the fact that one day the priest returned from celebrating the Divine Liturgy, and “found his entire house irradiated by a bright light; for he saw a globe of fire stationary over the face of the little sleeping boy. And seeing it, he immediately trembled with fear, and, falling with his face to the ground in great wonder, he understood that the grace of the Holy Spirit was poured out from heaven upon his foster-child.” (A, C)

Columba was ready to begin learning to read, Cruithnechan “went to a certain prophet to ask when the boy ought to begin. The prophet scanned the sky and said: “Write an alphabet for him now.” The alphabet was written on a cake. And Columkille consumed the cake as follows: half to the east of the water, and half to the west of the water. The prophet said: ‘So shall this child’s territory be, half to the east of the sea [Scotland], and half to the west of the sea, that is, in Ireland.’” (I)

was a gifted pupil, for once when Cruithnechan faltered while reading Psalm 118, Columba took up where he stopped and read it to the end. (M)

the saint was sent to the monastic school of the holy Bishop Finnian at Moville, at the head of Strangford Lough. St. Finnian was an Irish Pict who had brought the monastic ideal to Ireland from St. Ninian’s monastery at Whithorn, in South-West Scotland.

We do not know the size of his school, but in general the monastic schools of Ireland were very large: those of Clonard, Bangor and Clonfert all had 3000 students at a time. The students would sit around on grassy slopes listening to the lectures. They were taught classical languages, theology, philosophy, general literature and science. By the eighth century Ireland had a great reputation for scholarship and was called insula sanctorum et doctorum, "the island of saints and scholars". The students were given degrees, called the Seven Degrees of Wisdom. The first degree was given when the student had mastered all the Psalms in Latin. The seventh degree was that of Ollamh, Doctor, or Sai Litre, Professor of Literature. (M)

St. Columba was ordained to the diaconate at Moville. One feast day, when St. Finnian was celebrating the Liturgy, he couldn't find the wine that was necessary for the sacrament. "Columba, hearing the ministers at the altar complaining about this, took the cruet and went to the spring to draw water for the serving of the Holy Eucharist. When he had drawn it, he said to the ministers: 'Here is wine for you which the Lord has sent for the celebration of His Mysteries.' When this became known, the holy bishop and his ministers gave great thanks to God. But the holy youth ascribed this, not to himself, but to the holy Bishop Finnian." (C, A)

St. Columba's time at Moville is remembered in an ancient poem on the patron Saints of the various Irish clans:

The Clanna Neil a sheltering oak Have found in Columcille,
And Uladh's sons are strong behind Great Finnian of Moville. (M)

But Columba now moved south to his mother's native land of Leinster, to the Christian bard Gemman. Here he learned poetry and literature and music, and probably some Greek. "It happened one day that a certain man, a savage, cruel, persecutor of the innocent, was pursuing a certain young girl who was fleeing from him on the level plain. And when by chance she saw the old man Gemman reading on the plain, she ran straight to him as fast as she could. And he, startled, called Columba, who was reading at a distance, so that both of them could, as far as they were able, defend the girl from her pursuer. But he, coming up immediately, without showing any sign of reverence, killed the girl with a lance as she was hiding under their cloaks; and, leaving her lying dead at their feet, turned to go away. Then the old man, deeply moved, turned to Columba and said: 'For how long, O holy youth Columba, shall God, the just Judge, allow this crime to go unavenged to our disgrace?' The saint then pronounced this sentence on the criminal, saying: 'In the same hour in which the soul of the girl he has killed mounts to heaven, the soul of the killer himself shall sink to hell.' And quicker than it takes to tell it, with the very word, like Ananias before Peter, so also the killer of the innocent fell dead on the spot before the eyes of the holy youth. The news of this sudden and terrible vengeance at once spread abroad through many parts of Ireland, together with the wonderful fame of the holy deacon." (A)

Seeking to improve his education still further, Columba moved on to the famous school of St. Finnian at Clonard. When he arrived he asked where he should build his

hut. Finnian replied: “At the door of the church.” This shows that Columba was not one of the poorest students, for the poorest would either be given free lodging by local landowners or would work for the richer students in return for board and lodging. The students took it in turn to grind the corn for the next day’s bread. Columba’s corn was ground so quickly that his fellow-students suspected that he was being helped by his guardian angel. Studying under St. Finnian, “Master of the Saints of Ireland”, at this time were several great Saints, who were known as “The Twelve Apostles of Ireland”, and included, besides Columba himself: Ciaran of Clonmacnoise, Brendan “the Navigator” of Clonfert, Brendan of Birr, Mobhi Clairenach of Glasnevin, Cainnech (Kenneth) of Aghaboe, Ruadhan of Lothra and Comgall of Bangor. (M)

St. Finnian wanted Columba to be his domestic bishop at Clonard, and to that end sent him to be consecrated to his cousin Echten (or Etchan), Bishop of Clonfad in Meath. However, according to the story, instead of making him a bishop, Echten ordained him to the priesthood a second time! Columba then said: “I regret that you have conferred this order upon me, but I shall never change this order while I live. For this reason, however, nobody shall ever again come to have orders conferred upon him in this church.” However, it is possible that Columba never wanted to be a bishop out of humility. And it is known that he never allowed any of his abbots to become bishops. (M)

When Columba was about to leave Clonard, St. Finnian had a vision. He saw two moons in the sky, one of silver and the other of gold. The golden moon went to the north of Ireland and both Ireland and Scotland basked in its light. The silver moon went to the River Shannon and lit up the centre of the island. The golden moon signified St. Columba, who went north and then east to Scotland, and the silver moon signified St. Ciaran, who founded his great monastery at Clonmacnoise on the Shannon.

Columba now followed his friends Saints Ciaran, Kenneth and Comgall to Glasnevin, where St. Mobhi had just founded a monastery. There the friends continued their studies. But in 544 the school was broken up because of an outbreak of the yellow plague (although some sources believe it was because of war). So Columba traveled north, to his native land.

Monastic Founder

King Aedh of Ireland now offered him a fort at Derry, “Place of the Oaks”, within sight of the sea some thirty miles from Gartan Lough, to build a monastery. However, the saint at first refused because the place was in the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of St. Mobhi. However, as he was coming out of the fort, he met two of Mobhi’s monks, who told him that their master had just died, and they brought his girdle to Columcille as a sign that he could take possession of the land.

So Columba took the land and founded his first monastery at Derry in about 545, filling it mainly with his relatives, including his cousin and foster- son, St. Baithene, his successor as abbot of Iona.

Columba loved Derry – "my soul to Derry," he said as he was dying. He loved the sea at Derry, "the salt sea where the sea-gulls cry", and also the oaks, and would not allow any of them to be cut down. They would be used only if they had fallen by natural decay or been struck down by lightning, to light a fire on the arrival of pilgrims.

"While at Derry it is said that he planned a pilgrimage to Rome and Jerusalem, but did not proceed farther than Tours. Thence he brought a copy of those gospels that had lain on the bosom of St. Martin for the space of 100 years." (E)

St. Columba wrote poetry in both Latin and Irish, and one of his poems was about Derry:

Were all the tribute of Scotia mine,
From its midland to its borders,
I would give all for one little cell
In my beautiful Derry.
For its peace and for its purity,
For the white angels that go
In crowds from one end to the other.
I love my beautiful Derry
For its quietness and its purity,
For heaven's angels that come and go,
Under every leaf of the oaks,
I love my beautiful Derry.

Other monasteries he founded in this period were Durrow (c. 556) in central Irealnd, Raphoe, Drumcliffe in Sligo, Swords near Dublin, Glen Columcille in Donegal (whose ruins can still be seen), Tory island, Moone in Kildare and Kells in Meath. At Raphoe he "brought to life a wright who had been drowned in a mill-pond". At Swords, "he marked out a well, named Sord, that is, 'pure', and dedicated a cross. For it was his custom to make crosses and writing tablets and book-satchels and other church implements". It is claimed that he founded no less than 27 Irish monasteries, as well as some 40 churches.

Kells was formerly a fort of Diarmada, son of Cerbaill. "Columcille marked out the city in extent as it now is, and blessed it all, and said that it would become the most illustrious possession he should have in the land, although his resurrection would not be there" (I). This prophecy was fulfilled when, in 804, as the *Annals of Ulster* record, Kells was "given, without dispute, to Columcille the musical" – in other words, to the monks of Iona who had been driven out of their monastery by the Vikings.

Columba is called “the musical” here because he was famed for his singing voice, which was so strong that it could be heard on Iona by a man on the neighbouring island of Mull:

The sound of the voice of Columcille,
Great its sweetness above all clerics.
To the end of fifteen hundred paces,
Though great the distance, it was clearly heard. (I)

The monasteries built by Columba and other monastic founders at this time were not constructed of stone, but of wood. The name given to this ancient Irish wooden church was Duirthech, from dairthech, a house of oak, or Deirthech, from dear, a tear – that is, a house in which tears are shed.

The saint went all over Ireland visiting and strengthening his monastic communities. He even founded a church on the Aran islands off the west coast of Ireland. It is said that he discovered there the grave of an abbot of Jerusalem, who had come to Aran to visit St. Enda, and died there. (M)

It was on a visit to the Aran islands that he wrote his “Farewell to Aran”:

Farewell! A long farewell to thee,
Oh Aran my sun!
My heart is in the west with thee.
It is the same to lie beneath thy pure soil
As to be buried in the land of Peter and Paul.
Paradise is with thee,
The Garden of God within the sound of thy bells.
The angels love Aran,
Each day an angel comes there
To join in its services.
Oh Aran my sun!
My love is in the west with thee!

It was at about this time that St. Columba composed the following poem in Old Irish:

O Son of my God, what a pride, what a pleasure,
To plough the blue sea!
The waves of the fountain of deluge to measure,
Dear Eire, to Thee.
We are rounding Moy-n-Olurg, we sweep by its head, and
We plunge through Loch Foyle,
Whose swans could enchant with their music the dead, and
Make pleasure of toil.

The host of the gulls come with joyous commotion
And screaming and sport,
I welcome my own "Dewy-red" [Columba's boat] from the ocean
Arriving in port.
O Eire, were wealth my desire, what a wealth were
To gain far from thee,
In the land of the stranger, but there even health were
A sickness to me!
Alas for the voyage! O high King of heaven,
Enjoined upon me,
For that I on the red plain of bloody Cooldrevin
Was present to see.
How happy is the son of Dima [St. Cormac of Durrow], no sorrow
For him is designed.
He is having, this hour, round is own hill in Durrow,
The wish of his mind.
The sounds of the winds in the elms, like the strings of
A harp being played,
The note of the blackbird that claps with the wings of
Delight in the glade.
With him in Ross-Grench [Durrow] the cattle are lowing
At earliest dawn.
On the brink of the summer the pigeons are cooing
And doves on the lawn.
Three things things am I leaving behind me, the very
Most dear that I know,
Tir-leedach [his people] I'm leaving, and Durrow and Derry,
Alas, I must go!
Yet my visit and feasting with Comgall have eased me
At Cainneach's right hand,
And all but thy government, Eire, has pleased me,
Thou waterfall land.

Columba was able to see his guardian angel, and once the angel asked him what virtues he most longed to have. Columba said: wisdom, prophecy and chastity. Soon afterwards three lovely maidens appeared to him and would have embraced him. The saint frowned and pushed them away. "What!" they cried. "Don't you know us? We are three sisters whom our Father is giving you as your brides!" "Who is your Father?" asked the saint. "Our Father is God, He is Jesus Christ, the Lord and Saviour of the world," they replied. "And our names are Virginity, Wisdom and Prophecy. We have come to leave you no more, but to love you with an incorruptible love."

"Columba could not spend even a single hour without devoting himself to prayer, reading or writing, or to some other similar work. He was so occupied day and night, without the slightest intermission, in the unwearied exercise of fasting and watching,

that the burden of each of these austerities seemed beyond the possibility of human endurance. And still in these he was beloved by all, always exhibiting in his countenance that holy cheerfulness with which the joy of the Holy Spirit was gladdening his inmost soul." (A)

The Battle of Cooldrevin

Columba loved to copy manuscripts. It is said that once he asked a hermit called Longarad-of–the-hairy-legs if he could examine his manuscripts. When Longarad refused, Columba was angry and said: "May your books no longer do you any good, neither to you nor to those who come to you, since you use them to show inhospitality!" (M)

The saint's zeal for Scriptural studies manifested itself again, with serious consequences... Once St. Finnian of Moville returned from Pope Pelagius (555-560) in Rome with many beautiful manuscripts, once of which was a copy of the Psalter and probably also the whole Gospel in St. Jerome's translation. Columba visited his old master and asked to see the manuscripts. Then he secretly began to copy the Gospel, remaining in the church after the services to do it. "At night while engaged in that transcription, the fingers of his right hand were as candles which shone like five very bright lamps, whose light filled the whole church. On the last night when Columcille was completing the transcription of that book, Finnian sent for it. When the messenger arrived at the door of the church, he was astonished at the great light he saw within, and a great fear seized him. Timorously he glanced through a hole which was in the valve of the door of the church, and when he beheld Columcille... he dared not address him nor demand the book of him. It was revealed to Columcille, however, that the youth was thus watching him, whereat he became very angry, and, addressing a pet crane of his said: 'If God permits, you have my permission to pluck out that youth's eyes, who came to observe me without my knowledge.' With that the crane immediately went and drove its beak through the hole of the valve towards the youth's eye, plucked it out and left it resting on his cheek. The youth then returned to Finnian and related to him the whole of his adventure. Thereupon Finnian was displeased and blessed the youth's eye, so that it was as well as ever and without being injured or affected in any way." (D)

Finnian was angry with Columba for copying the manuscript without his permission, and claimed the copy Columba had made as his own property. Columba disagreed. So the two saints went to the High King Diarmait, son of Cerbaill, chief of the southern clan of the Ui-Neill, who lived at Tara, the traditional capital of Ireland. Finnian said that it was though Columba had cut his corn without permission. Columba admitted he had copied the book, but said that it was his own labour, the book had not diminished in value by virtue of being copied, and that it was not right to prevent it from being copied and read by others for the glory of God.

However, Diarmait, although he was a relative of Columba's, decided in favour of Finnian, saying: "To every cow her calf, to every book its transcript. Therefore the

copy you have made, O Columcille, belongs to Finnian." At this Columba rose up and said: "It is a wrong judgement, and you will be punished for it."

Another incident made the situation worse. Staying at Tara at the time was a son of the King of Connacht, Curnan, who was being held as a hostage for his father. He was playing a game of hurling, and had an argument with another player. Curnan got angry and struck the other player on the head, at which he fell down dead. The young man fled to Columba, invoking the right of sanctuary with the Church which Columba represented. But the men of King Diarmait pursued him, dragged him away and executed him.

This was not the only time that Diarmait violated the right of sanctuary. Once he violated the sanctuary of Ruadhan of Lothra, and carried off a person under Ruadhan's protection to Tara. On refusing to give him up, he was cursed by Ruadhan. For Ruadhan and a bishop that was with him took the bells they had and cursed the king and Tara, and prayed God that no king or queen should live in Tara ever again, and that it should be waste for ever, without court or palace. And this is what happened in fact...

Columba immediately set off for his homeland in the north. Sending his followers by another route, he set off alone over the mountains, composing the famous poem known as The Song of Trust, which contained the line: *My Druid is Christ, the Son of God*. Why the reference to the Druids, the priests of the pagan religion of Ireland? Because King Diarmait, though nominally a Christian, would use Druid spells in his struggle against Columba...

Alone am I on the mountain,
O royal Sun! prosper my path
And then I shall have nothing to fear.
Were I guarded by six thousand, they might defend my skin,
When the hour of death is fixed,
Were I guarded by six thousand,
In no fortress could I be safe.
Even in a church the wicked are slain, an isle amidst a lake;
But God's elect are safe
Even in the front of battle.
No man can kill me before my day,
Even had we closed in combat;
And no man can save my life
When the hour of death has come.
My life!
As God pleases let it be;
Nought can be taken from it,

Nought can be added to it,
The lot which God has given
Ere man dies must be lived out.
He who seeks more, were he a prince,
Shall not a mite obtain.
A guard!
A guard may guide him on his way;
But can they guard
Against the touch of death?...
Forget thy poverty awhile;
Let us think of the world's hospitality.
The Son of God will prosper thee
And every guest shall have his share.
Many a time
What is spent returns to the bounteous hand.
And that which is kept back,
None the less has passed away.
O living God!
Alas for him who evil works!
That which he thinks not of, comes to him,
That which he hopes, vanishes out of his hand.
There is no Sreod (magic) that can tell our fate,
No bird upon the branch
Nor trunk of gnarled oak...
Better is He in Whom we trust,
The King Who has made us all,
Who will not leave me tonight without refuge.
I adore not the voice of birds,
Nor chance, nor the love of a son or a wife.
My Druid is Christ, the Son of God,
The Son of Mary, the Great Abbot,
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit...

Also attributed to St. Columba is the following:

Alone with none but Thee, my God,
I journey on my way;
What need I fear when Thou art near,
O King of night and day?
More safe am I within Thy hand
Than if a host did round me stand.

Columba gathered the clans of his father, the Ui-Neill, and his mother, and together with the King of Connacht, who joined them in 561, they took arms against the High

King of Ireland. On the eve of the battle, Columba spent the night in prayer and fasting, and while he prayed the holy Archangel Michael appeared to him and said that in answer to his prayers he and his men would win the battle, but since he had asked for such a worldly favour, the blessing of God would not be upon him until he had exiled himself beyond the sea, never to return to Ireland, never to partake of her food and drink, never more to behold her men and women... (D)

Before the battle, which took place at Culdreimhne (Cooldrevin), King Diarmait prepared himself with Druidic rituals, marching his men around a cairn in the direction of the sun, and drawing an airbhe, a kind of invisible fence, between the two armies so that the enemy could not pass. St. Finnian had been praying for Diarmait's army, but when he saw how the battle was progressing he ceased praying so that the victory could be more speedily won and bloodshed stopped. On the morning of the battle the Archangel Michael was seen, armed as a warrior with a shield and a sword, leading Columba's men, who were surrounded with fog. Diarmait was routed, leaving 3000 dead on the battlefield, with only one of Columba's men killed. Columba now made peace with King Diarmait – and kept the book. (D)

The pages of a mutilated 6th century manuscript known as the Cathach, or "Battle Reliquary", which is now in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy, may well be part of the copy Columba made from Finnian's book. According to Professor Lindsay, it is written in "a half-uncial script reduced in size and made more flowing. In other words, the formal book-hand of the time seems to have been modified so as to enable the writer to get through his task more quickly and to use less parchment." It is the oldest surviving example of Irish majuscule writing. In the 11th century Columba's O'Donnell clan made a silver and bronze shrine for it. At all future battles of the clan, this shrine with the Psalter was carried in front of the army. (M)

The 7th century illuminated Gospel book known as the Book of Durrow has an inscription saying: "I pray thy blessedness, O holy presbyter Patrick, that whosoever shall take this book into his hands may remember the writer Columba. I wrote this Gospel for my own use in the space of twelve days, by the grace of our Lord." Following this inscription is an addition, probably by an Abbot of Durrow, to the effect that he had transcribed it from the original written by the hand of Saint Columba. It is possible that this book was copied from the Cathach.

The battle disturbed many Irish churchmen, and at a Synod in Telltown in Meath St. Columba was formally accused of having caused the deaths of 3000 soldiers and was excommunicated even before he had arrived to present his case. However, God intervened to change the sentence. For as the Saint was coming to the assembly, he was seen from a distance by St. Brendan of Birr. "He rose quickly, and with face bent down reverently kissed him. And when some elders of that assembly, apart from the rest, rebuked him, saying: 'Why did you not refrain from rising up to a person who is excommunicated and kissing him?'... He said: 'If you had seen those things which the Lord has not disdained to show me today regarding this, His chosen one, you would never have excommunicated one whom not only does God in no way excommunicate,

according to your unjust sentence, but continues to exalt more and more.' But they said: 'We would like to know how, as you say, God glorifies him whom we have excommunicated, and not without reason.' 'I have seen,' said Brendan, 'a very bright, comet-like pillar going before this same man of God, whom you despise, and also holy angels accompanying him as he walks across the plain. So I do not dare to offend this man whom I see has been fore-ordained by God to be the leader of nations to life.' When he had said these words, not only did they stop, not daring to excommunicate him further, but even honoured him with great veneration." (A)

Having revoked the sentence of excommunication on Columba, the Synod imposed the following penance on him: to win as many souls for Christ as had fallen on the battle-field.

Still not recognizing his guilt, Columba went to St. Molaise (Laserian), his soul-friend or confessor, who lived on the isle of Innishmurray. St. Molaise advised him to accept the sentence of the Archangel and exile himself from Ireland.

Still not satisfied, Columba went to another friend, who prayed for the souls of those killed in the battle and assured Columba that they "now enjoyed eternal repose".

Before leaving Ireland, St. Columba l to Moville to be reconciled with his old teacher. Finnian was walking outside his monastery one April night when he saw Columba coming towards him. And he also saw "an angel of the Lord accompanying him. Then he said to those of his brothers who were with him: 'Behold! Look at Columba as he approaches. He has been deemed worthy of having an angelic inhabitant of heaven to be his companion on his wanderings!'"

Eventually bowing to the verdict of the Church and of the holy Archangel Michael, St. Columba exiled himself from his native land which he loved so much. It must be said, however, that not all authorities agree with the above account of Columba's leaving Ireland. Adomnan does not mention it, saying only that he "resolved to seek a foreign country for the love of Christ", and the Old Irish *Life* only says that "the illustrious saint left his home for the love and favour of Christ", adding that "this was the resolution which he had determined on from the beginning of his life", which is also confirmed by Bede. Moreover, Adomnan says that he returned ten times to Ireland, which suggests that if he had been exiled as a penance, it was soon relaxed. Nevertheless, the balance of probability rests with O'Donnell's account.

The Founding of Iona

In May, 563 the saint set out from Derry with twelve companions on an exile which was to bring the Faith of Christ to Scotland again, over one and a half centuries since the first mission of St. Ninian of Whithorn. The names of his companion monks were: Baithene (or Conin), his cousin and foster-son, who succeeded him as Abbot of Iona; Cobthach, Baithene's brother; Ernan, Columba's uncle, who became Abbot of Hinba

island; Diarmait, his cell- attendant until his death; Rus (or Ruisein), Fiachna (or Fechno), also brothers; Scannal (or Scandal), Lugaid, Eechaid (or Echoid), Mochonna, Caronan (or Cairnaan) and Greallen (or Grilaan).

Mochonna was the son of an Irish king. Columba spoke to him about his duty to his father and mother and native land. But Mochonna replied: "It is you who are my father, the Church is my mother, and my country is where I can gather the largest harvest for Christ! I swear to follow you wherever you go, until you have led me to Christ, to Whom you consecrated me."

As Columba left Ireland in his frail boat, he composed his Song of Farewell:

How swift is the speed of my coracle;
Its stern turned to Derry;
I grieve at my errand o'er the noble sea,
Travelling to Alba [Britain] of the ravens.
My foot in my good little oracle,
My sad heart still bleeding:
Weak is the man who cannot lead;
Totally blind are all the ignorant.
A grey eye looks back to Erin,
A grey eye full of tears;
It shall never see again
The men of Erin nor their wives.
While I stand on the deck of my barque
I stretch my vision o'er the briny sea,
Westwards to Erin.

Apart from the fulfillment of his penance, there was another reason why Divine Providence had brought Columba to Scotland. In 560, three years before his voyage, Brude (or Bridei) mac Maelchon (or Maclochon), King of the Northern Picts, "a most powerful prince" (B), had defeated the Irish Scots, killing King Gabhran. Columba must have hoped that he could bring peace to his countrymen in their dangerous situation by helping to convert the Picts. And so the travellers stopped first on the Island of Kintyre, where Columba visited his cousin Connall, who had succeeded Gabhran as king of the Irish colony in Scotland.

From Kintyre, they went on to the island of Colonsay and landed at Oransay, a little islet separated from Colonsay only at high tide. But when he climbed to its highest point, he could still see the hills of Ireland. So he set off once more. That hill is still called Cairn-cul-ri-Erin, "Cairn-of-the-back- turned-to-Ireland".

"There is a tradition that Columba sailed up Loch Caolisport in Knapdale and landed at Ellary. Here, he found shelter in a large, airy cave, where there is an altar built of flat stones and a cross carved into the rock wall above, dating from early times.

There is a stream with a waterfall nearby, and from the cave Columba could have watched seals playing around the islet at the head of the loch. There are remains of a medieval chapel beside the cave. By the eighth century there was a monastery a mile away, probably founded from Iona, at a place named Cladh a Bhile, or 'burial ground of the holy tree'. We can glimpse the monks baking bread and conducting funerals, for many early gravestones and querns for grinding corn were found here.

"Columba is said to have continued northward to Dunadd, whose rocky outcrop had been fortified only sixty years earlier. Rising from flat, boggy land beside the River Add, it made an excellent fortress. A surprise attack was impossible: its main entrance is a natural gully with a timber superstructure. Dunadd was at the centre of Dalriada; the king and his retinue stayed here on royal progress between his other forts.

"A small peak was used as an inner citadel, and carved into the bedrock in front of it are a ceremonial basin and the impression of a foot, dating from the seventh or eighth century. These may have been used for royal inaugurations, in a ceremony in which the king was anointed and symbolically stepped into the shoes of his predecessor, or perhaps claimed the land on which he stood, since Dalriada can be surveyed in all directions from this spot. Beside the ceremonial footprint is an Irish Ogham inscription and a Pictish carving of a boar, possibly relating to a marriage alliance between Gaels and Picts. Dunadd's chieftains lived in style: a read garnet set in gold filigree from Anglo-Saxon England was found there, and pottery from Gaul. Dunadd's craftsmen made jewelry, iron tools and weapons. A lump of yellow pigment used to illuminate manuscripts was also discovered there. The fortress was occupied until 1000." (R)

On the eve of Pentecost, May 12th, St. Columba and his disciples stopped at the tiny island of Iona, three-and-a-half miles long by one-and-a-half miles broad, which is just off the much larger island of Mull. Columba went to the top of the hill (400 feet), but could not see Ireland. So they dragged their boat to the top of the bay, dug a deep grave, and buried the boat there. To this day the bay is called Port-na-Churaich, "Port-of-the-Coracle".

"The sixth-century Annals of Ulster record that King Conall gave Iona to Columba; but the island was on the frontier between Dalriada and the territory of the Picts, and King Brude considered Iona to be his kingdom." (R)

Then "Columcille said to his people: 'It would be good for us if our roots should pass into the earth here. One of you is permitted to go under the earth of this island in order to consecrate it.' Then Odhran [a Briton] rose quickly and said: 'If you accept me, I am ready for that.' 'O Odhran,' said Columcille, 'you shall receive a reward for this: no request shall be granted to anyone at my tomb unless he first ask it of you.'' (I) Then Odhran "was seized by a bodily illness and brought to the edge of death. And when the venerable man visited him in the hour of his departure, he stood for a short time at his bedside blessing him, and then went quickly out of the house, not wishing to see him die. And at the same moment that the holy man left the house, he ended his

life. Then the illustrious man, walking in the little court of his monastery, his eyes lifted up to heaven, was for a long time lost in wonder and admiration. But a certain brother name Aidan, son of Libir, a man of a religious and good disposition, who alone of the brothers was present at the time, began on bended knees to ask the saint to tell him why he was so greatly amazed. The saint said to him: 'I have just seen holy angels in the air warring against the enemy power, and I give thanks to Christ the Judge that the angels have prevailed, and have borne up to the joys of the Heavenly Country the soul of this exile, the first who has died among us on this island. But I beseech you not to reveal this holy secret to anyone in my lifetime." (A)

Odhran's burial place is still called Relig Oran, and a little chapel built by Queen Margaret of Scotland at the end of the 11th century stands on the spot.

Columba built his monastery on the eastern side of the island facing Mull. The cells of the monks were built of wood and earth, with the abbot's cell, or Tuguriolum, on slightly elevated ground in the centre.

The twelve Irish monks were joined by Britons and Saxons, and soon "the Family", as Columba called his community, numbered 150 monks. As the Old Irish verse said:

Wondrous the warriors who abode in Hi [Iona],
Thrice fifty in the monastic rule,
With their boats along the main sea,
Three score men a-rowing.

Columba called his monks "Soldiers of Christ", and he himself was called "the Warrior of the Island". They were divided into *Seniors,* the older monks, who were mainly engaged in transcribing manuscripts; the *Working Brothers*, who did the physical work, made the food, herded the sheep and cattle and worked the farm; and the *Juniors* or *Alumni,* who wore the monastic habit but had not yet taken their vows.

Among the Juniors there were often penitents from other communities. They were led to Columba and required to confess their sins on bended knees in front of the assembled brothers, after which the Saint gave them absolution and a penance. Sometimes their penance would be exile for seven or twelve years on the neighbouring island of Tiree. At the end of their penance, the penitents were led to the chapel where they made their vows on bended knees in front of the Saint.

Some of the brothers were blessed to lead a solitary life in a disert (a Coptic word), or hermitage. There is a bay at Iona called Port-na-Disert, "the Port of the Hermitage".

The monks were tonsured by having the whole of the front part of their head shaved from ear to ear. This had become the usual tonsure in Ireland since the time of St. Patrick. They wore cassocks of rough, undyed wool over a tunic of finer texture;

on feast-days they wore white robes. St. Columba wore no linen next to his skin, and wore a cowl. In bad weather the monks were allowed an extra outer cloak.

The meals at the monastery consisted of cereals, porridge, bread, milk, eggs and fish. Sometimes a seal was captured (seal skins were also used for clothing, and the oil for burning), and sometimes a salmon. Once when Columba and five of his companions were fishing in the river Seil and had caught nothing. “Try again,” said Columba. In obedience to his command they hauled in their nets a salmon of astounding size.

Wednesdays and Fridays were fastdays throughout the years except between Pascha and Pentecost. In Lent the fast was kept until evening of every day except Sunday, when milk, bread and eggs were allowed during the day. Once a sheep was killed for a poor man. Wheat was grown on the island, near Temple Glen. The monks, including Columba himself, would carry the wheat in from the fields and grind it in a hand-quern. Later a water-mill was constructed, whose wheel was turned by the water that flowed past the barn and the smithy. Loaves were baked on a flat stone over a fire. Later, as the number of monks increased, there was not enough grain on the island to support the monks, so it was grown on Tiree island, the “Ethica Insula” or “Land of Corn”.

The monks would go to sleep on pallets of heather or bracken covered by a sheet without taking their cassocks off. Columba himself slept on a stone flag with a granite boulder as his pillow. It can still be seen: it is 20 inches long, and has a cross incised on one side.

At the end of a hard day’s work, Columba would wash his monks’ feet. There are many stories of his loving care for his monks. Once on a very cold day in winter, Diarmait noticed that his master looked worried. “And with good cause,” said Columba. “I am sad today, my child, seeing that my monks, already tired after their severe labours, have been set to work building a large house by Laisran. With this I am very displeased.” By Divine intuition Laisran felt the saint’s displeasure, and immediately ordered the monks of Derry to stop building and take some refreshment. And he ordered that they should rest also on other days of bad weather. St. Columba, “hearing in spirit these words of consolation... rejoiced with exceeding great joy... while he blessed Laisran for his timely relief to the monks.” (A)

The saint also loved animals. Once he told one of his monks to go in three days to a far hilltop and wait. "'For when the third hour before sunset is past, there shall come flying from the northern coasts of Ireland a stranger guest, a crane, wind tossed and driven far from her course in the high air; tired out and weary she will fall upon the beach at thy feet and lie there, her strength nigh gone. Tenderly lift her and carry her to the steading near by; make her welcome there and cherish her with all care for three days and nights; and when the three days are ended, refreshed and loath to tarry longer with us in our exile, she shall take flight again towards that old sweet land of Ireland whence she came, in pride of strength once more. And if I commend

her so earnestly to thy charge, it is that in the countryside where thou and I were reared, she too was nested.'" The brother obeyed and all happened as Columba had foretold. "And on his return that evening to the monastery the Saint spoke to him, not as one questioning but as one speaks of a thing past. 'May God bless thee, my son,' said he, 'for thy kind tending of this pilgrim guest; that shall make no long stay in her exile, but when three suns have set shall turn back to her own land.'" And so it happened (A).

"Once the holy man, who was living in Iona at the time, suddenly raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'Happy woman, happy for your virtues, you whose soul God's angels are now bearing to Paradise.' Now there was a certain religious brother, Genere by name, a Saxon and a baker, working at the baker's trade, who had heard this word proceeding from the mouth of the saint. And on the same day of the month at the end of the same year, the saint said to the same Genere, the Saxon: 'I see a wonderful thing. Behold, the woman of whom I spoke in your presence last year is now meeting in the air the soul of her husband, a certain religious peasant, and together with the holy angels is fighting for it against the envious powers; and, their assistance and the good life of that poor man recommending him, his soul is rescued from the warring demons and conducted to the place of eternal refreshment.'" (A)

"On another day, in a similar manner, when the holy man was living in Iona, he called to him early in the morning his attendant Diarmait and commanded him: 'Let the sacred requisites for the Eucharist be made ready quickly, for today is the birthday feast of Blessed Brendan [of Birr].' 'Why,' said the attendant, 'are you ordering that such a solemn celebration of the Liturgy should be prepared for today? For no messenger of the death of that holy man has come to us from Ireland.' Then the saint said: 'Go; you should obey my order. For last night I saw heaven suddenly opened and choirs of angels descend to meet the soul of the holy Brendan. And by their luminous and incomparable brightness the whole world was illumined in that hour.'" (A, C)

The Conversion of the Picts

For two years Columba was engaged in establishing his monastery. Then, in 565, he set out with some companions along the Great Glen leading to Inverness, to the capital of the Northern Pictish kingdom where the Pictish King Brude lived. "It so happened that that king, elated by royal pride in his fortress, haughtily refused to open the gates when the blessed man first arrived. And when the man of God knew this, he came with his companions to the wicker gate, and first traced on it the Sign of the Lord's Cross and then laid his hand against the doors and knocked. Immediately the bolts violently shot back and the doors opened in all haste of their own accord, whereupon the saint entered with his companions. When the king and his council heard of this, they were very frightened, and came out from his house to meet the blessed man with all reverence, and addressed him gently with conciliatory words. From that day and for the rest of his life this ruler greatly honoured the holy and venerable man, as was proper." (A)

According to other sources, the saint was accompanied by St. Comgall of Bangor and St. Kenneth of Aghaboe (Kilkenny), who were called to help the mission since they were of the Pictish race. When they entered the gate, King Brude tried to draw his sword and kill them. However, St. Kenneth made the sign of the cross and the king's hand suddenly withered. It remained so until he was baptized by St. Columba.

Once, "when the blessed man was staying for some days in the province of the Picts, he was obliged to cross the river Ness; and when he had come to the bank, he saw some of the inhabitants burying an unfortunate man whom, as those who were burying him related, some aquatic monster had seized and savagely bitten a little earlier while he was swimming. Some men belatedly came up in a boat and rescued his unfortunate body by throwing out hooks. However, when the blessed man heard these things, he ordered one of his companions to swim out and bring him from over the water a coble which was beached on the other side. Hearing the command of the holy and illustrious man, Lugne Mocumin immediately obeyed, took off all his clothes except his tunic, and cast himself into the water. But the monster, which was lying on the river bed, and whose appetite was rather whetted for more prey than sated with what it already had, perceiving the surface of the water disturbed by the swimmer, suddenly came up and moved towards the man as he was swimming in mid-stream, and with a great roar rushed on him with open mouth, while all who were there, barbarians as well as brothers, were struck with great fear. Seeing it, the blessed man made the saving Sign of the Cross in the empty air with his holy hand upraised, invoked the name of God, and commanded the ferocious monster, saying: 'Go no further, nor touch the man; go back at once.' On hearing this word of the saint, the monster was terrified, and fled away again more quickly than if it had been dragged off by ropes, though he had approached Lugne as he was swimming so closely that between man and monster there was no more than the length of one punt pole. Then the brothers marveled greatly, seeing that the monster had gone back, and that their comrade Lugne had returned to them in the boat, untouched and unharmed; and they glorified God in the blessed man. And even the barbarous pagans who were there were constrained by the greatness of the miracle which they themselves had seen to magnify the God of the Christians." (A)

Again, "a certain peasant, on hearing the word of life through an interpreter as the holy man preached, believed and was baptized, he and his wife and children and servants. A few days later, one of the sons of the family was assailed by a severe illness, and was brought even to the boundary between life and death. And when the Druids saw him dying, they began to rail at the parents with great abuse, and to exalt their own gods as the stronger, disparaging the God of the Christians as weaker. And when all these things were reported to the blessed man, he was stirred up with zeal for God and went with his companions to the house of his friend the peasant, where the parents were celebrating the sad funeral of their child, who was by this time dead. And the saint, seeing their great sadness, consoled them, urging them by no means to distrust the Divine omnipotence. And then he asked: 'In what room does the body of the dead boy lie?' The bereaved father then led the saint under his roof of mourning, and he, leaving the whole crowd outside, immediately entered the house of woe alone;

where forthwith, on bended knees, his face bathed with copious tears, he prayed to Christ the Lord. Then, rising from his knees, he turned his eyes to the dead one and said: 'In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, arise and stand upon your feet.' At this glorious word of the saint, his soul returned to his body, and the dead boy came back to life and opened his eyes, and the apostolic man, holding his hand, raised him up, and, steadying him on his feet, led him out of the house and restored him alive to his parents. Then the shouting of the people rose on high; weeping was turned into rejoicing; the God of the Christians was glorified..." (A)

"The venerable man asked of the magician Broichan that a certain slave, an Irish woman, should be released as an act of human kindness. And when Broichan, with unyielding and obstinate heart, retained her, the saint addressing him spoke in this manner: 'Know this, Broichan, that if you will not release for me this pilgrim captive before I depart from this province, you will soon die.' This he said in front of King Brude; and he left the king's house and came to the river Ness. From that river he took a white stone, and said to his companions: 'Mark this white stone. Through it the Lord will work many cures of the sick among this heathen people.' After pronouncing these words he continued: 'Now Broichan has received a hard blow. For an angel sent from heaven has struck him heavily, and broken into many piece in his hand the glass vessel from which he was drinking, and has left him breathing with difficulty, and near to death. Let us wait a little in this place for two messengers of the king, sent to us in haste, to obtain our immediate help for the dying Broichan. Now Broichan, terribly stricken, is ready to release the slave-girl.' While the saint was speaking these words, behold, as he had predicted, two men on horseback, sent by the king, arrived, and told all that had happened concerning Broichan, in the king's fortress, in accordance with the prophecy of the saint: the breaking of the cup, the magician's seizure, the intended release of the slave-girl. And they added this: 'The king and the persons of his household have sent us to you, to obtain your help for his foster-father Broichan, who is near death.' When he heard these words of the envoys, the saint sent two of his companions to the king with the stone that he had blessed, and said: 'If Broichan first promises that he will release the slave- girl, then let this stone be dipped in water, and let him drink of it, and he will at once recover his health. But if he refuses, and opposes the slave-girl's release, he will immediately die.' The two emissaries went to the king's castle, in obedience to the saint's instructions, and repeated to the king the words of the venerable man. When these things had been made known to the king and to Broichan his foster-father, they were very much afraid. And in the same hour the slave-girl was set free and handed over to the envoys of the holy man. The stone was dipped in water, and, in a marvelous manner, contrary to nature floated on the water as though it had been an apple or a nut. And the blessing of the holy man could not be submerged. After he had drunk of the floating stone, Broichan immediately returned from the brink of death, and recovered full bodily health. This stone was later kept among the king's treasures. When it was dipped in this way in water, and floated, it effected many cures among the people through the mercy of the Lord. Strange to say, when it was sought by people whose time had come, the stone could not by any means be found. It was also sought on the day of King Brude's death, but was not found in the place where it had formerly been kept." (A)

"One day, after the above-mentioned events, Broichan said to the holy man: 'Tell me, Columba, when do you propose to sail away from us?' 'On the third day,' said the saint, "God willing and life remaining, we propose to begin our voyage.' 'You will not be able to do so,' replied Broichan, 'for I can make the wind go against you, and bring dark clouds upon you.' The saint said: 'The omnipotence of God rules over all things. In His name, and through His dominion, all our steps are directed.' What more needs to be said? On the same day that he had planned in his heart, the saint came to the long lake of the river Ness with a great crowd following him. But when the Druids saw a great darkness coming over, and contrary wind with a storm, they began to rejoice. That these things can be done by demons, if God permits it, so that even winds and waters are stirred up into a rage, should not be wondered at. For it was in this way that legions of demons met the holy bishop Germanus [of Auxerre] as he was sailing from the English Channel to Britain for the sake of the salvation of men. They stirred up dangerous storms and spread darkness over the sky and obscured the daylight. However, all these storms were stilled, and stopped with the speed of a word, by the prayer of St. Germanus; and the darkness was swept away. Our Columba, therefore, seeing the raging elements stirred up against him, called upon Christ the Lord, and, entering the boat while the sailors were hesitating, with still greater confidence ordered the sail to be rigged against the wind. When this was done, as the whole crowd was watching, the boat was borne along with amazing speed. And soon the contrary winds veered round to the advantage of the voyage to the astonishment of all. And so, throughout the day, the blessed man's boat was driven along by gentle favouring breezes, and reached the desired haven. Let the reader therefore consider how great and saintly was that venerable man through whom Almighty God manifested His glorious name by such miraculous powers as have just been described in the presence of the pagans." (A)

Columba is said to have built two churches at Brude's capital in Inverness. The Book of Deer tells us that St. Columba and St. Drostan came, as God had shown them, to Aberdur in Buchan, and that Bede, a Pict, who was high steward of Buchan, gave them the town. The preaching of the saint was confirmed by many miracles, and he provided for the instruction of his converts by the erection of numerous churches and monasteries. (E)

Another saint on the mainland with whom St. Columba was friendly was St. Kentigern, Bishop of Glasgow. Columba "desired earnestly, not once and away, but continually to come into his [Kentigern's] close intimacy, and to consult the sanctuary of his holy breast regarding the things that lay near his own heart. And when the proper time came the holy father S. Columba went forth, and a great company of his disciples and of others who desired to behold and look upon the face of so great a man, accompanied him. When he approached the place called Mellindenor, where the saint abode at the time, he divided all his people into three bands, and sent forward a message to announce to the holy prelate his own arrival, and that of those who accompanied him.

"The holy pontiff was glad when they said unto him these things concerning them, and calling together his clergy and people similarly in three bands, he went forth with spiritual songs to meet them. In the forefront of the procession were placed the juniors in order of time; in the second those more advanced in years; in the third, with himself, walked the aged in length of days, white and hoary, venerable in countenance, gesture, and bearing, yea, even in grey hairs. And all sang, 'In the ways of the Lord how great is the glory of the Lord'; and again they answered, 'The way of the just if made straight, and the path of the saints prepared'. On S. Columba's side they sang with tuneful voices, 'The saints shall go from strength to strength, until unto the God of gods appeareth every one in Sion', with the alleluia. Meanwhile, some who had come with S. Columba asked him, saying, 'Hath S. Kentigern come in the first chorus of singers?' The saint answered, 'Neither in the first nor in the second cometh the gentle saint.' And when they loudly asked how he knew this, he said, 'I see a fiery pillar in fashion as of a golden crown, set with sparkling gems, descending from heaven upon his head, and a light of heavenly brightness surrounding him like a certain veil, and covering him, and again returning to the skies. Wherefore it is given me to know by this sign that, like Aaron, he is the elect of God, and sanctified; who, clothed with light as with a garment, and with a golden crown represented on his head, appeareth to me with the sign of sanctity.' When these two godlike men met, they mutually embraced and kissed each other, and, having first satiated themselves with the spiritual banquet of Divine words, they after that refreshed themselves with bodily food." (K)

"Once when the holy man was making a journey on the other side of the Spine of Britain beside the lake of the river Ness, he was suddenly inspired by the Holy Spirit, and said to the brothers who were traveling with him: 'Let us hasten towards the holy angels that have been sent from the highest regions of heaven to conduct the soul of a pagan, and who await our coming there so that we may give timely baptism, before he dies, to that man, who has preserved natural goodness throughout his life into extreme old age. Saying this, the aged saint went as fast as he could, ahead of his companions, until he came to the farmland that is called Airchartdan [Glen Urquhart]. And a certain old man whom he found there, Emchath by name, on hearing and believing the word of God with trust, was baptized; whereupon he gladly and confidently departed to the Lord with the angels that had come to meet him. And his son Virolec also believed and was baptized, together with his whole house." (A)

"At another time, when the blessed man was staying for some days in the island of Skye, he went on his own far away from the brothers, seeking a place for prayer. On entering a thick wood, he met a boar of extraordinary size whom a hound happened to be chasing. The saint saw him from a distance and stood still watching him. Then, invoking the name of God and raising his holy hand, he prayed earnestly and said to the boar: 'Come no further in this direction; on the place to which you have now come, die!' As the sound of the saint's words rang in the woods, not only was the terrible beast unable to come closer: he immediately fell down before his very face, killed by the power of his word." (A, C).

"Another time, when the saint was living on the Rechrena island, a certain man of humble birth came to him and complained of his wife, who, as he said, so hated him, that she would on no account allow him to come near her for marriage rights. The saint on hearing this, sent for the wife, and, so far as he could, began to reprove her on that account, saying: 'Why, O woman, dost thou endeavour to withdraw thy flesh from thyself, while the Lord says, 'They shall be two in one flesh'? Wherefore the flesh of thy husband is thy flesh.' She answered and said, 'Whatever thou shalt require of me I am ready to do, however hard it may be, with this single exception, that thou dost not urge me in any way to sleep in one bed with Lugne. I do not refuse to perform every duty at home, or, if thou dost command me, even to pass over the seas, or to live in some monastery for women.' The saint then said, 'What thou dost propose cannot lawfully be done, for thou art bound by the law of the husband as long as thy husband liveth, for it would be impious to separate those whom God has lawfully joined together.' Immediately after these words he added: 'This day let us three, namely, the husband and his wife and myself, join in prayer to the Lord and in fasting.' But the woman replied: 'I know it is not impossible for thee to obtain from God, when thou askest them, those things that seem to us either difficult, or even impossible.' It is unnecessary to say more. The husband and wife agreed to fast with the saint that day, and the following night the saint spent sleepless in prayer for them. Next day he thus addressed the wife in presence of her husband, and said to her: 'O woman, art thou still ready today, as thou saidst yesterday, to go away to a convent of women?' 'I know now,' she answered, 'that thy prayer to God for me hath been heard; for that man whom I hated yesterday, I love today; for my heart hath been changed last night in some unknown way – from hatred to love.' Why need we linger over it? From that day to the hour of death, the soul of the wife was firmly cemented in affection to her husband, so that she no longer refused those mutual matrimonial rights which she was formerly unwilling to allow." (A)

The Synod of Drumceatt

In 574, Connall, king of the Irish colony in Scotland, died. Eogan, son of Gabrham was the direct heir. However, through a Divine revelation to St. Columba it was not Eogan, but his brother Aidan who became king through the saint's ordination. This suggests that the saint may in fact have been a bishop, which is not as unlikely as it sounds if we remember that the abbots of the Irish Church appear to have been more important than the bishops and may also have had episcopal rank, which may explain both why there is hardly a mention of an Irish bishop after the death of St. Patrick (an exception to this rule is Bishop Conleth, who lived in St. Brigid's monastery in Kildare) and why the writers of the lives of the holy abbots did not think it necessary to mention their episcopate.

The story of Aidan's ordination is as follows. When the saint was staying "in the island of Hymba [Eileann-na-Naoimh], he was in an ecstasy of mind one night and saw an Angel of the Lord who had been sent to him, and who held in his hand a glass book of the Ordination of Kings. The venerable man received it from the Angel's hand, and at his command began to read it. And when he refused to ordain Aidan as king

according to the direction given to him in the book, because he loved his brother Eogan more, the Angel, suddenly stretching out his hand, struck the saint with a scourge, of which the livid mark remained on his side all the days of his life, and he added these words, saying: 'Know for certain that I am sent to you by God with this glass book, that in accordance with the words which you have hast read in it, you may ordain Aidan to the kingship – and if you art not willing to obey this command, I shall strike you again.' When, then, this Angel of the Lord had appeared on three successive nights, having in his hand that same glass book, and had pressed the same commands of the Lord concerning the ordination of that king, the saint obeyed the Word of the Lord, and sailed across to the isle of Iona where, as he had been commanded, he ordained Aidan as king [by tradition, on the Stone of Scone], Aidan having arrived there at the same time." (C, A)

The next year, St. Columba went with King Aidan to the Synod of Drumceatt in Ireland, which had been convened by King Aedh. On the way, as they came to the whirlpool of Corryvreckan, a great storm struck them. Water was pouring over the sides of the boat, and Columba with his fellows was baling it out. But then the monks stopped him. "What you are doing now is of little use to us in our present danger," they said. "You should rather pray for us, as we are perishing." Columba the "ceased to throw out the bitter waters of the green wave and began to pour out a fervent and sweet prayer to the Lord. Wonderful to relate! At the very moment that the saint stood up in the prow with his hands outstretched to Heaven and prayed to the Almighty, the whole storm of wind and the fury of the sea ceased more quickly than can be told, and a perfect calm instantly ensued. But those who were in the boat were amazed, and giving thanks with great admiration, glorified the Lord in the holy and illustrious man." (A)

When the travellers arrived in Ireland, they were joined by many of Columba's friends and disciples. According to the *Old Irish Life*, Columba "came from the East with a cloth over his eyes and his dalmatic above that, and the cape of the cowl over it all, so that he might not see the men of Ireland, nor her women." And O'Donnell says that he put "a sod of Alba under his feet" so that he might not tread on the soil of Ireland. Be that as it may, he certainly uncovered his eyes later in his trip; and we must assume that his penance was now fulfilled. When Columba entered the assembly, everyone stood up. Columba argued for the independence of Dalriada (that part of Western Scotland colonised by the Irish, of which Iona was the spiritual capital). This was agreed upon in exchange for a pledge of assistance to the mother country in the event of invasion from abroad.

According to the *Old Irish Life*, however, it was another matter that brought Columba back to his native land. Scannlan Mor, son of King Cennfaedladh of Ossory, was a hostage in the hands of King Aedh, and Columba was surety for him that he would be released at the end of the year. But the end of the year came, and "he was not released, and no hostage was accepted in his stead. And a wicker hut was constructed around him, without any passage out of it except an opening through which a little salted food and a small allowance of ale used to be given to him. And

fifty warriors used to be outside the hut guarding him. And there were nine chains upon him in the hut. And when saw anyone going past, he would say: 'A drink'. And this was reported to Columcille in Iona, and he wept greatly at what he heard; and it was this that brought him quickly from the East." (I)

When Columba demanded his release at the Synod, the king said: "I shall not release him until he dies in the hut in which he is." The saint replied: "We shall not pursue the matter further; but if it be pleasing to God, may it come about that he takes off my shoes tonight at Mattins, wherever I may be." Then he went to the Black Abbey church at Derry, where Scanlann, who had been released by an angel, met him in front of the screen during Mattins, and helped him take off his shoes. After feeding him, the saint sent him to Ossory with his bachall, or crozier. Scanlann arrived on the day that his father died of grief for him, whereupon he assumed the kingship, and thereafter gave a tribute to Columcille every seventh year.

At the same Synod, the saint intervened successfully to prevent the extinction of the institution of the Irish bards, of whom he was one. Their leader, Dallan Forgaill, then composed the Amhra Columcille in his honour, which twelve hundred of them sang to music. At this it is said that the saint was overcome by vainglory; and Baithene, who was accompanying him, pointed out to him a group of demons who were scoffing in the sky above. Ashamed, the saint covered his head with his mantle, and the demons fled. But he forbade his praises to be sung any more, saying that one should not praise someone whose life might end badly, and that those who ran well and ended the race successfully should be praised only after their death.

At the same Synod Columba healed many people. "For many sick people, believing, recovered perfect health, either through the stretching out his holy hand, or through being sprinkled with water blessed by him, or even by the touch of the border of his cloak or of anything – salt, for example, or bread – that had been blessed by him and dipped in water." (A) These materials acquired special properties. Thus a piece of rock salt that had been blessed by him "for the benefit of his sister and nurse, who was suffering from a very severe attack of ophtalmia", was left unharmed when the whole of her cottage was burned by fire.

Again, a book of hymns for the week that had been copied out by the saint was found clean and dry after it had lain in the waters of a Leinster river from the Nativity of the Lord to the end of the Paschal season.

The Repose of St. Columba

The saint reposed on June 9, 597.

"While the blessed man was living in Iona, his holy countenance one day was lighted up suddenly with strange transports of joy; and raising his eyes to heaven he

was filled with delight, and rejoiced beyond measure. After an interval of a few seconds, that sweet and enchanting delight was changed into a mournful sadness. Now, the two men, who at the same hour were standing at the door of his hut, which was built on the higher ground, and were themselves also much afflicted with him - of whom the one was Lugne Mocublai, and the other a Saxon named Pilu, - asked the cause of this sudden joy, and of the sorrow which followed. The saint said to them, 'Go in peace, and do not ask me now to explain the cause of either that joy or that sadness.' On hearing this they humbly asked him, kneeling before him in tears, and with faces sunk to the ground, to grant their desire of knowing something concerning that matter which at that same hour had been revealed to the saint. Seeing them so much afflicted, he said, 'On account of my love to you, I do not wish you to be in sadness; but you must first promise me never to disclose to any one during my life the secret you seek to know.' They made of course the promise at once according to his request, and then, when the promise was made, the venerable man spake to them thus: 'On this very day, thirty years of my sojourn in Britain have been completed, and meanwhile for many days past I have been devoutly asking of my Lord to release me from my dwelling here at the end of this thirtieth year, and to call me thither to my heavenly fatherland. And this was the cause of that joy of mine, of which in sorrowful mood you ask me. For I saw the holy angels sent down from the lofty throne to meet my soul when it is taken from the flesh. But, behold now how they are stopped suddenly, and stand on a rock at the other side of the Sound of our island, evidently being anxious to come near me and deliver me from the body. But they are not allowed to come nearer, because, that thing which God granted me after praying with my whole strength - namely, that I might pass from the world to Him on this day, - He hath changed in a moment in His listening to the prayers of so many churches for me. These churches have no doubt prayed as the Lord hath granted, so that, though it is against my ardent wish, four years from this day are added for me to abide in the flesh. Such a sad delay as this was fitly the cause of the grief today. At the end of these four years, then, which by God's favour my life is yet to see, I shall pass away suddenly, without any previous bodily sickness, and depart with joy to the Lord, accompanied by His holy angels, who shall come to meet me at that hour.' According to these words, which the venerable man uttered, it is said, with much sorrow and grief, and even many tears, he afterwards abode in the flesh for four years.

"Four years later, in May, 597, the saint went in a cart to visit some of the brethren who were at work. And having found them at work on the western side of Iona, he began to speak to them that day, saying, 'During the paschal solemnities in the month of April now past, with desire have I desired to depart to Christ the Lord, as He had allowed me, if I preferred it. But lest a joyous festival should be turned for you into mourning, I thought it better to put off for a little longer the time of my departure from the world.' The beloved monks all the while they were hearing this sad news were greatly afflicted, and he endeavoured as well as he could to cheer them with words of consolation. Then, having done this, he turned his face to the east, still seated as he was in his chariot, and blessed the island with its inhabitants; and from that day to the present, as we have stated in the Book above mentioned, the venomous reptiles with the three forked tongues could do no manner of harm to man or beast.

“After uttering these words of blessing, the saint was carried back to his monastery. Then, again, a few days afterwards, while he was celebrating the solemn offices of the Liturgy as usual on the Lord's day, the face of the venerable man, as his eyes were raised to heaven, suddenly appeared as if suffused with a ruddy glow, for, as it is written, 'A glad heart maketh a cheerful countenance.' For at that same hour he alone saw an angel of the Lord hovering above within the walls of his oratory; and as the lovely and tranquil aspect of the holy angels infuses joy and exultation into the hearts of the elect, this was the cause of that sudden joy infused into the blessed man. When those who were present on the occasion inquired as to the cause of that joy with which he was evidently inspired, the saint looking upwards gave them this reply, ‘Wonderful and unspeakable is the subtility of the angelic nature! For lo, an angel of the Lord, who was sent to demand a certain deposit dear to God, hath, after looking down upon us within the church, and blessing us, returned again through the roof of the church, without leaving any trace of his passage out.’ Thus spoke the saint. But none of the bystanders could understand what kind of a deposit the angel was sent to demand. Our patron, however, gave the name of a holy deposit to his own soul that had been intrusted to him by God; and after an interval of six days from that time, as shall be related further on, he departed to the Lord on the night of the Lord's day.

“In the end, then, of this same week, that is on the day of the Sabbath, the venerable man, and his pious attendant Diormit, went to bless the barn which was near at hand. When the saint had entered in and blessed it, and two heaps of winnowed corn that were in it, he gave expression to his thanks in these words, saying, ‘I heartily congratulate my beloved monks, that this year also, if I am obliged to depart from you, you will have a sufficient supply for the year.’ On hearing this, Diormit his attendant began to feel sad, and said, ‘This year, at this time, father, thou very often vexest us, by so frequently making mention of thy leaving us.’ But the saint replied to him, ‘I have a little secret address to make to thee, and if thou wilt promise me faithfully not to reveal it to any one before my death, I shall be able to speak to thee with more freedom about my departure.’ When his attendant had on bended knees made the promise as the saint desired, the venerable man thus resumed his address: ‘This day in the Holy Scriptures is called the Sabbath, which means rest. And this day is indeed a Sabbath to me, for it is the last day of my present laborious life, and on it I rest after the fatigues of my labours; and this night at midnight, which commenceth the solemn Lord's Day, I shall, according to the sayings of Scripture, go the way of our fathers. For already my Lord Jesus Christ deigneth to invite me; and to Him, I say, in the middle of this night shall I depart, at His invitation. For so it hath been revealed to me by the Lord himself.’ The attendant hearing these sad words began to weep bitterly, and the saint endeavoured to console him as well as he could.

“After this the saint left the barn, and in going back to the monastery, rested half way at a place where a cross, which was afterwards erected, and is standing to this day, fixed into a millstone, may be observed on the roadside. While the saint, as I have said, bowed down with old age, sat there to rest a little, behold, there came up to him a white pack-horse, the same that used, as a willing servant, to carry the milk-vessels from the cow-shed to the monastery. It came up to the saint and, strange to say, laid

its head on his bosom—inspired, I believe, by God to do so, as each animal is gifted with the knowledge of things according to the will of the Creator; and knowing that its master was soon about to leave it, and that it would see him no more—began to utter plaintive cries, and like a human being, to shed copious tears on the saint's bosom, foaming and greatly wailing. The attendant seeing this, began to drive the weeping mourner away, but the saint forbade him, saying: 'Let it alone, as it is so fond of me, let it pour out its bitter grief into my bosom. Lo! thou, as thou art a man, and hast a rational soul, canst know nothing of my departure hence, except what I myself have just told you, but to this brute beast devoid of reason, the Creator Himself hath evidently in some way made it known that its master is going to leave it.' And saying this, the saint blessed the work-horse, which turned away from him in sadness.

"Then leaving this spot, he ascended the hill that overlooketh the monastery, and stood for some little time on its summit; and as he stood there with both hands uplifted, he blessed his monastery, saying: 'Small and mean though this place is, yet it shall be held in great and unusual honour, not only by Scotic kings and people, but also by the rulers of foreign and barbarous nations, and by their subjects; the saints also even of other churches shall regard it with no common reverence.'

"After these words he descended the hill, and having returned to the monastery sat in his hut transcribing the Psalter, and coming to that verse of the 33rd Psalm, where it is written, 'They that seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good,' 'Here,' said he, 'at the end of the page, I must stop; and what follows let Baithene write.' The last verse he had written was very applicable to the saint, who was about to depart, and to whom eternal goods shall never be wanting; while the one that followeth is equally applicable to the father who succeeded him, the instructor of his spiritual children: 'Come, ye children, and hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord;' and indeed he succeeded him, as recommended by him, not only in teaching, but also in writing.

"Having written the aforementioned verse at the end of the page, the saint went to the church to the nocturnal vigils of the Lord's Day; and so soon as this was over, he returned to his chamber, and spent the remainder of the night on his bed, where he had a bare flag for his couch, and for his pillow a stone, which stands to this day as a kind of monument beside his grave. While then he was reclining there, he gave his last instructions to the brethren, in the hearing of his attendant alone, saying: 'These, O my children, are the last words I address to you–that ye be at peace, and have unfeigned charity among yourselves; and if you thus follow the example of the holy fathers, God, the Comforter of the good, will be your Helper and I, abiding with Him, will intercede for you; and He will not only give you sufficient to supply the wants of this present life, but will also bestow on you the good and eternal rewards which are laid up for those that keep His commandments.' Thus far have the last words of our venerable patron, as he was about to leave this weary pilgrimage for his heavenly country, been preserved for recital in our brief narrative.

"After these words, as the happy hour of his departure gradually approached, the saint became silent. Then as soon as the bell tolled at midnight, he rose hastily, and went to the church; and running more quickly than the rest, he entered it alone, and knelt down in prayer beside the altar. At the same moment his attendant Diormit, who more slowly followed him, saw from a distance that the whole interior of the church was filled with a heavenly light in the direction of the saint. And as he drew near to the door, the same light he had seen, and which was also seen by a few more of the brethren standing at a distance, quickly disappeared. Diormit therefore entering the church, cried out in a mournful voice, 'Where art thou, father?' And feeling his way in the darkness, as the brethren had not yet brought in the lights, he found the saint lying before the altar; and raising him up a little, he sat down beside him, and laid his holy head on his bosom. Meanwhile the rest of the monks ran in hastily in a body with their lights, and beholding their dying father, burst into lamentations. And the saint, as we have been told by some who were present, even before his soul departed, opened wide his eyes and looked round him from side to side, with a countenance full of wonderful joy and gladness, no doubt seeing the holy angels coming to meet him. Diormit then raised the holy right hand of the saint, that he might bless his assembled monks. And the venerable father himself moved his hand at the same time, as well as he was able–that as he could not in words, while his soul was departing, he might at least, by the motion of his hand, be seen to bless his brethren. And having given them his holy benediction in this way, he immediately breathed his last. After his soul had left the tabernacle of the body, his face still continued ruddy, and brightened in a wonderful way by his vision of the angels, and that to such a degree that he had the appearance, not so much of one dead, as of one alive and sleeping. Meanwhile the whole church resounded with loud lamentations of grief.

"I must not omit to mention the revelation made to a certain saint of Ireland, at the very time the blessed soul departed. For in that monastery which in the Scotic language is called Clonifinchoil *(now Rosnarea, in parish of Knockcommon, Meath)*, there was a holy man named Lugud, son of Tailchan, one who had grown old in the service of Christ, and was noted for his sanctity and wisdom. Now this man had a vision which at early dawn he told in great affliction to one called Fergnous, who was like himself a servant of Christ. 'In the middle of this last night,' said he, 'Columba, the pillar of many churches, passed to the Lord; and at the moment of his blessed departure, I saw in the spirit the whole island of Iona, where I never was in the body, resplendent with the brightness of angels; and the whole heavens above it, up to the very zenith, were illumined with the brilliant light of the same heavenly messengers, who descended in countless numbers to bear away his holy soul. At the same moment, also, I heard the loud hymns and entrancingly sweet canticles of the angelic host, as his holy soul was borne aloft amidst the ascending choirs of angels.' Virgnous, who about this time came over from Scotia *(Ireland)*, and spent the rest of his life in the Hinba island *(Eilean-na- Naoimh)*, very often related to the monks of St. Columba this vision of angels, which, as has been said, he undoubtedly heard from the lips of the old man himself, to whom it had been granted. This same Virgnous, having for many years lived without reproach in obedience amongst the brethren, led the life of an anchorite, as a victorious soldier of Christ, for twelve years more, in the hermitage of

Muirbulcmar. This vision above mentioned we have not only found in writing, but have heard related with the utmost freedom by several well-informed old men to whom Virgnous himself had told it.

"Another vision also given at the same hour under a different form was related to me – Adomnan – who was a young man at the time, by one of those who had seen it; and who solemnly assured me of its truth. He was a very old man, a servant of Christ, whose name may be called Ferreol, but in the Scotic tongue Ernene, of the race of Mocufirroide, who, as being himself a holy monk, is buried in the Ridge of Tomma *(now Drumhome, county Donegal)*, amidst the remains of other monks of St. Columba, and awaits the resurrection with the saints; he said: 'On that night when St. Columba, by a happy and blessed death, passed from earth to heaven, while I and others with me were engaged in fishing in the valley of the river Fend *(the Finn, in Donegal)* – which abounds in fish – we saw the whole vault of heaven become suddenly illuminated. Struck by the suddenness of the miracle, we raised our eyes and looked towards the east, when, lo! there appeared something like an immense pillar of fire, which seemed to us, as it ascended upwards at that midnight, to illuminate the whole earth like the summer sun at noon; and after that column penetrated the heavens darkness followed, as if the sun had just set. And not only did we, who were together in the same place, observe with intense surprise the brightness of this remarkable luminous pillar, but many other fishermen also, who were engaged in fishing here and there in different deep pools along the same river, were greatly terrified, as they afterwards related to us, by an appearance of the same kind.' These three miraculous visions, then, which were seen at the very hour of our venerable patron's departure, show clearly that the Lord hath conferred on him eternal honours. But let us now return to our narrative.

"After his holy soul had departed, and the Mattins hymns were finished, his sacred body was carried by the brethren, chanting psalms, from the church back to his chamber, from which a little before he had come alive; and his obsequies were celebrated with all due honour and reverence for three days and as many nights. And when these sweet praises of God were ended, the venerable body of our holy and blessed patron was wrapped in a clean shroud of fine linen, and, being placed in the coffin prepared for it, was buried with all due veneration, to rise again with lustrous and eternal brightness.

"And now, near the close of this book, we shall relate what hath been told us by persons cognisant of the facts, regarding the above-mentioned three days during which his obsequies were celebrated in due ecclesiastical form. It happened on one occasion that a certain brother speaking with great simplicity in the presence of the holy and venerable man, said to him, 'After thy death all the people of these provinces will row across to Iona, to celebrate thine obsequies, and will entirely fill it.' Hearing this said, the saint immediately replied: 'No, my child, the event will not turn out as thou sayest; for a promiscuous throng of people shall not by any means be able to come to my obsequies: none but the monks of my monastery will perform my funeral rites, and grace the last offices bestowed upon me.' And the fulfillment of this

prophecy was brought about immediately after his death by God's almighty power; for there arose a storm of wind without rain, which blew so violently during those three days and nights of his obsequies, that it entirely prevented every one from crossing the Sound in his little boat. And immediately after the interment of the blessed man, the storm was quelled at once, the wind ceased, and the whole sea became calm." (A)

The relics of St. Columba were at first buried at Iona.

St. Baithene, Abbot of Iona

"We know for certain," writes the Venerable Bede (+735) "that Columba left successors distinguished for their purity of life, their love of God, and their loyalty to the rules of the monastic life." At least ten out of the first thirteen abbots of Iona belonged to St. Columba's clan. It was the custom in the Irish Church for these coarbs, or successors of the first abbot, to be of the same clan.

St. Baithene, who was Columba's cousin and foster-son, was the first coarb. He was a gentle man, who would often intercede for sinners with whom Columba was angry. All the monks loved him, and Columba compared him to St. John the Apostle. He was also admired for his great learning, which was second only to Columba's. He was full of the spirit of prayer: while walking his hands would always be clasped round his cassock; while carrying oats from the fields he would pray; and at meals between every two morsels of food he would say: *Deus in auditorium meum*, "O Lord, hear me".

Once, when he had finished transcribing the last page of the Book of Psalms, he brought it to Columba for checking. But Columba replied: "Why trouble me for no reason? There is not one superfluous letter to be found in that Psalter, and not one letter missing except one vowel 'i'".

Once Baithene had a vision. He saw three thrones in Heaven, one of gold, one of silver and one of glass. "This is clear," said Columba. "Ciaran son of the wright [St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise] has the throne of gold on account of his honour and because of his hospitality. You yourself, O Baithene, have the throne of silver, because of your purity and the luster of your devotion. The throne of glass is mine, for though my devotion is fair, I am often frail, and I am carnal."

Baithene was in charge of Hinba and Mag Luinbe on Tiree, where traces of early churches are still to be found. Once, before sailing to Tiree, he went to Columba for a blessing, and the saint told him that there was a whale in the area. But Baithene was not alarmed. "The beast and I," he said, "are under the power of God." "Go in peace then," said Columba, "your faith in Christ will defend you from this danger."

And so Baithene set sail. When they were well on the way to Tiree he and his brother monks saw the whale. The others were terrified. But Baithene was fearless. Standing up in the prow, he raised his hands and blessed the sea and the whale.

St. Baithene reposed in the year 600. He is commemorated on June 9.

St. Maelrubha of Applecross

Our holy Father Maelrubha may have been a distant relative of St. Columba who continued the founder's tradition of missionary work in the North-West of Scotland. He was born in Ireland and became a monk in Bangor, County Down in about 671. In 673 he founded a monastery at Applecross (Ross and Cromarty). From this base he evangelized the Isle of Skye, went as far north as Loch Broom and founded another twenty churches, including one on an island in Loch Maree where there was a healing spring.

He died at Applecross on April 21, 722 at the age of eighty.

A stone cross by the cemetery gate is from the monastery's early years and marks the grave of an abbot, perhaps St. Maelrubba. He is commemorated on April 21 and August 27. (F, S)

St. Adomnan, Abbot of Iona

The next abbots after St. Baithene were: Lasren Mac Feradaig (600-605), who was also in charge of Durrow; Fergnae (605-623), who was not a relative of Columba and probably had some British blood; Segene (623-652), who was the nephew of Lasren, and died on August 12, 652; Suibhne moccu Urthri (652-657), who died on January 11, 657; Cumme (657-669), a nephew of Segene who visited Ireland in 661, and died on February 24, 669; Failbe (669- 679), a third cousin of Cummene, who spent from 673 to 676 in Ireland, and died on March 22, 679; and then St. Adomnan (679-704).

St. Adomnan (Adamnan, Aunan, Eunan) was born in Drumhome, Donegal, Ireland, in about 624. Once a chief named Finnachta came with a large company to visit Adomnan's sister. He met the saint, who was then only a boy, walking along the road with a jar of milk on his head. As Adomnan moved out of the way he slipped and the jar of milk fell to the ground and was broken. Finnachta said: "You will receive protection from me, O student. Do not grieve." Adomnan replied: "Good man, I have reason to grieve, for there are three fine students in my house, and three more of us are attendants on them. And what we do is this: one attendant goes out to get food for the other five. And it was my turn today, but what I collected for them has been spilled on the ground. And which grieves me more, the borrowed jar is broken, and I do not have the wherewithal to pay for it." Finnachta remembered the conscientious boy, and later, when Finnachta became King of Ireland, they became soul-friends.

In imitation of his relative, the great St. Columba, Adomnan left Ireland and in 650 became a monk under Abbot Seghine in the Scottish island monastery of Iona. In 679, Seghine died, and Adomnan succeeded him as abbot. He was also president-general of all the Columban houses in Ireland. In this position the saint displayed great virtue

and worked many miracles, and was counted worthy of seeing visions of the Lord Jesus Christ, of heaven and of hell.

In 686, in response to a request from the Irish, Adomnan went on a mission to King Aldfrid of Northumbria, who had studied under him in Ireland. His aim was to secure the release of sixty-six Irish captives whom Aldfrid's predecessor Egrid had seized in the previous year. Now he put in at a part of the English coast where the tide was very fast and landing dangerous; so the English tried to persuade him to land there. But Adomnan told his monks: "Push your boats onto the shore; for both land and sea are obedient to God, and nothing can be done without His permission." The monks did as they were told. Then the Saint drew a circle with his crozier around the boats. Immediately the sea formed a high wall around them so that the land they were on became an island, and the sea went part them without harming them.

St. Adomnan was the author of a *Life of St. Columba,* and also of *On the Holy Places,* based on the account of the French Bishop Arculf who had been shipwrecked in Scotland. He presented the autograph copy to King Aldfrid.

In 688 Adomnan visited St. Ceolfrith of Wearmouth, who converted him from the Celtic to the Roman-Byzantine method of calculating the date of Pascha. In 692 he took part in the synods of the Irish Church as the ruler of all the Ionan monasteries in Northern Ireland. Then and in 697, at the Synod of Tara, he met with considerable success in persuading the Irish to accept the Roman-Byzantine calendar. Only his own monasteries stood out against him – it was left to St. Egbert to convert them.

At the same synod, the Cain Adamnain, or Canon of Adomnan was adopted, which ruled that women, children and clergy should be exempted from participation in war and should be treated by all as non-combatants. The Cain Adamnain established legal rights for women for the first time in British history.

St. Adomnan died on September 23, 704. Before his death he asked for his body to be carried on a bier made of willow twigs, and where it broke he would be buried. He was buried 15 miles east of Innerwick in the village of Dull. (S)

The cult of St. Adomnan flourished in both Ireland and Scotland with dedications to him in Donegal, Derry, and Sligo as well as Aberdeenshire, Banff, Forfar and the Western Isles. In 727 the relics of Adomnan were brought from Iona to Ireland to help make peace between the tribes of Adamnan's father and mother. They were carried round forty churches which had been under Iona's rule: the people swore to obey the Law of Adomnan. His shrines were desecrated by Northmen in 830 and 1030.

St. Adomnan is commemorated on 23 September.

St. Egbert of Iona

The next abbots were Conamail (704-710) and Dunchad (707-717), who died on 25 May, 717. These two abbots were in schism from each other, perhaps because of the calendar question. The calendar schism on Iona was finally resolved during the abbacy of St. Egbert.

Our holy Father Egbert was a Northumbrian of noble birth who became a monk at Lindisfarne. While studying in Ireland at the monastery of Rathmelsigi, his companion Aethelhun was killed by the plague of 664. He was also struck by the plague, and promised voluntary exile for life if he recovered.

Egbert, according to the Venerable Bede, "led a life of great humility, gentleness, purity, simplicity, and uprightness. He brought great blessings both to his own nation, and to the Picts and Irish among whom he exiled himself, setting them an example of holy life. He was indefatigable in teaching, firm in administering reproof, and generous in distributing whatever he received from the rich."

He planned to do missionary work among the Germans. So, continues Bede, "this warrior of Christ planned to sail around Britain and attempt to snatch some of them from Satan and bring them to Christ. If this proved impossible, he proposed to travel to Rome, to visit and venerate the shrines of the blessed Apostles and martyrs of Christ.

"From the execution of either of these projects, however, he was stayed by heavenly portents and manifestations. He had already chosen the boldest of his companions, whose distinguished lives and learning rendered them well fitted to preach the Gospel, and all preparations for the voyage were complete. Then early one morning he received a visit from one of the brethren, who had formerly been a disciple and assistant in Britain to God's beloved priest Boisil, when... he was Prior of the monastery of Melrose under Abbot Eata. This brother told him of a vision which he had seen that night: 'After the morning hymns,' he said, 'I had lain down on my pallet and fallen into a light sleep, when my old master and most loving teacher Boisil appeared to me, and asked whether I recognized him. "Of course I do," I said, "you are Boisil." He then said: "I have come to bring a message from our Lord and Saviour to Egbert, which you must deliver to him. Tell him that he is not to go on the journey that he has in mind; for it is God's will that he should go and instruct the monks of Columba." Now Columba was the first teacher of the Christian Faith to the Picts living north of the mountains, and founder of the monastery on the Isle of Iona, which long remained venerated by the people of the Picts and Irish. For this reason, Columba is now known by some people as Columbkill, a name compounded from 'Columba' and 'cell'. When Egbert had heard about this vision, he ordered the brother who had related it not to tell anyone else, in case the vision were a delusion; but silently turning it over in his own mind, Egbert feared that it was true. But he did not abandon his preparations for his voyage to evangelize the heathen.

"After a few days, this brother came to him once more, saying that Boisil had appeared to him in a vision after Mattins, saying: 'Why did you convey the message that I gave you for Egbert in such a careless and offhand fashion? Now go and tell him that, whether he wishes it or not, he is to visit the monks of Columba, because their ploughs do not run straight and it is his duty to recall them to the right way.' Hearing this, Egbert again enjoined the brother not to disclose the vision to anyone. But although he was now convinced of the vision's reality, he none the less attempted to carry out his projected voyage with the brethren. Then, when they had stored the ship with everything necessary for the voyage and had waited some days for a favourable wind, a storm of such violence arose one night that the ship was left lying on her beam ends among the breakers, and part of her stores was lost. However, everything belonging to Egbert and his companions was salvaged. Then, like the prophet Jonah, Egbert said: '*For my sake this great tempest is upon you.*' So he abandoned his plan, and resigned himself to staying at home..."

However, in 716 Egbert arrived in Iona from Ireland and began to teach them and persuade them to adopt the Byzantine-Roman Paschalion. He "was welcomed with honour and great joy. Being a most persuasive teacher who most faithfully practised all that he taught, he was given a ready hearing by everyone, and by his constant devout exhortations he weaned them from the obsolete traditions of their ancestors [i.e. the Celtic Paschalion], to whom the Apostle's description is applicable: 'they had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge'... He taught them to observe our chief solemnity [Pascha] in the Catholic and Apostolic manner and to wear the symbol of an unbroken crown. This seemed to happen by a wonderful dispensation of God's grace, in order that the nation which had willingly and ungrudgingly laboured to communicate its own knowledge of God to the English nation might later, through the same English nation, arrive at a perfect way of life which they had not hitherto possessed...

"... God's servant Egbert remained thirteen years on the island, where he restored the gracious light of unity and peace to the Church and consecrated the island anew to Christ. In the year of our Lord 729, during which our Lord's Pascha was kept on the twenty-fourth of April, Egbert celebrated the solemnity of the Divine Liturgy in honour of our Lord's Resurrection and departed to Him the same day... 'He rejoiced to see the Lord's Day; he saw it and was glad.'"

St. Egbert is commemorated on April 24.

St. Blaithmaic of Iona

"My mind and heart have been sore troubled," said St. Columba, "by a vision that has been given to me... for at the end of time men will besiege my churches, and they will kill my monks and violate my sanctuary, and ravage and desecrate my burial-grounds."

In 804 the monks of Iona were driven by the Vikings, and settled in Kells in Ireland. Some monks must have remained at Iona to guard the tombs of the kings and the shrine of St. Columba, and in 807 Abbot Cellach, after resigning his abbacy in Kells, returned to Iona and died there seven years later. His predecessor, Abbot Connachtach (801-802), was known as "a most excellent scribe", and may have transcribed the famous illuminated Gospel book known as The Book of Kells from a copy written by Columba himself. The next abbot, Diarmait (814-832), carried Columba's relics to Ireland.

But not all of the monks can have migrated, because in 806, according to the Annals of Ulster and the Annals of the Four Masters, 68 monks of Iona were killed by the Vikings at the beach of white sand on the eastern shore of the island a little south of the modern landing-place on Saint Ronan's Bay. The name Port nam Mairtir, "the Bay of the Martyrs" records the event.

St. Blaithmaic (or Blathmacc) was, like St. Columba, of royal blood of the clan of the Ui-Neill. One day he secretly abandoned his exalted position in the world and became a monk. When his father heard this, he was overcome with grief and sent a multitude of people, including a bishop, a general, abbots, soldiers and kinsmen, to try and persuade him to return. But the saint, having set his hand to the plough, did not turn back. In this way he practised the angelic life for several years.

But then he conceived the desire to suffer "the scars of Christ", that is, martyrdom. Several times he tried to go abroad with this end in mind, but the people held him back. And when he again tried to flee by night with a few disciples, a crowd of pursuers caught up with him and dragged the shepherd back to his flock.

The saint especially sought to go to Iona, where he knew that the Vikings frequently came. Eventually he became abbot of Iona, and there awaited the arrival of the Vikings. "Friends," he said to his monks, "cast within yourselves whether you have the courage to suffer for the name of Christ with me. Whoever of you can wait, I beseech you, steel yourselves with manly courage. But let those whose hearts quake within them flee and thereby escape the danger, preparing themselves for better offerings in the future. The trial of certain death approaches. Let firm faith stand poised and ready, and let cautious flight serve the less brave." At these words, the monks divided. Some rejoiced at the prospect of martyrdom and remained, while others took to flight by a track through the mountains.

On the morning of July 24 (or January 19), 825, a golden sun scattered the rain-drenched darkness. The holy abbot celebrated the Divine Liturgy, and then stood as a sacrificial lamb in front of the Holy Table. The rest of the monks stood praying with tears.

Then suddenly the Vikings poured in a raging torrent into the church. First they slaughtered the monks. Then they came to the holy father and demanded that he give them the precious reliquary of St. Columba. But the monks had taken the shrine from

its place and buried it in a grave, covering it with sods. When the pagans demanded this booty, the saint resisted them, saying: "I do not know what gold within you seek, nor where in the ground it may be stored, nor by what it is hidden. And if, Christ willing, I were permitted to know, not to your ears would I tell it. Take your swords, wield them barbarously, and kill me. O Life-giving God, I commend my humble soul to Thy protection." At this, the pagans cut the holy man to pieces... (W)

St. Blaithmaic is commemorated on January 19.

St. Indracht of Iona

St. Indracht [Indrechtact], grandson of Finechta, became abbot in 832. In 849 he came to Ireland with some of the relics of St. Columba. In the same year King Kenneth of Scotland also transferred some of the relics to the church he had built in Dunkeld. On March 12, 854, Indrecht was martyred with Diarmaid and other companions at Glastonbury on his journey to Rome.

"Some years later," writes William of Malmesbury, "the bodies of the martyr Indract and his comrades were translated from their place of martyrdom and buried in that church by Ine, King of the West Saxons, who had received a divine vision. Indract's body was put in a stone pyramid to the left of the altar, the others were put under the floor in places either carefully chosen or dictated by chance." However, William must have made a mistake here, for King Ine lived over a hundred years before St. Indract.

His feastday is May 8.

St. Feredarius of Iona

He was born in Ireland and became abbot of Iona in 863. His feastday is May 18.

Last Martyrs

After the destruction of Iona by the Vikings, parts of the body of St. Columba were translated to Dunkeld in 849, while parts were taken to Ireland, to Downpatrick, County Down, with St. Patrick and St. Brigid, or at Saul Church in neighbouring Downpatrick.

In 878 "the shrine of Columcille and all his mionna (non-corporeal relics) were brought to Ireland" (Annals of Ulster) by Abbot Cellach. In 904 the crozier of Columcille led the Scottish army that defeated the Danish King of Dublin Olaf at Strathearn. From that time the crozier "was called 'battle- victory'. It was a just name because they often won the victory in battle through it, even as they did on that occasion, when they placed their faith in Columcille." (Fragmentary Annals).

In about 880 a Hebridean bishop called Patrick blessed a Viking called Orlygr to emigrate to Iceland; he told him to build a church near Rejkyavik in honour of St. Columba and provided him with timber, a bell, a missal and consecrated earth to lay beneath the corner pillars of the building. Orlygr did as he was told.

The succession of abbots of Iona continued as follows: Feradach McCormac (+879); Flaun McMaleduin (+890); Maelbrigid, abbot of Armagh (+927); Aongas McMuricert (+935); Dubtach (+938), Caon conichrae (+945); Robhartach (+954); Finghin, bishop (+966); Fiachra (+977). By the 960s there was a bishopric at Iona, with a bishop called Fothad.

In 980 the Scandinavian ruler of Dublin, Olaf Cuaran, abdicated and became a monk in Iona. A grave-stone of that date at Iona bears a runic inscription saying: 'King Olvirsson laid this stone over his brother Fugl.'

Abbot Mugron with 15 monks. They were killed by the Danes on December 24, 985.

Abbot Maelciarin with 15 monks. On December 24, 986, according to the *Annals of Ulster*, Danes from Dublin descended upon the monastery of Iona in Scotland, and killed these monks at "the White Strand of the Monks".

In the next year, according to the *Annals of the Four Masters*, there was "a great slaughter of the Danes who had plundered [Iona], for three hundred and sixty of them were killed through the miracles of God and Columcille."

The last abbots of the Orthodox period were: Dunchad (+989); Dubthalethe, abbot of Armagh (+996); Maelbrigid (+1005); Muredach, resigned in 1007; Flanobra (+1025); MacNia O'Uachtan; Malmore (+1025); Robharbach (+1040); Gillechrist O'Maddor (+1057-1062).

Holy Hieromartyrs and Martyrs of Iona, pray to God for us!

APPENDIX THREE. ST. DAVID OF WALES, THE CELTIC CHURCHES AND EASTERN ORTHODOXY

Introduction

The phenomenon of the Celtic Churches, far to the west of the main centres of Orthodox Christianity in the East, and yet quite clearly of the same spirit as Eastern Christianity, and comparable to it in the rich abundance of its spiritual fruit, has fascinated Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. How could such a rare and beautiful flower arise in such an isolated and seemingly inhospitable environment?

Fr. Gregory Telepneff has provided part of the answer to this question in his book *The Egyptian Desert in the Irish Bogs* by demonstrating the strong links between Celtic and Egyptian monasticism. However, he identifies the Celtic Church with the Irish Church and its offshoots in Scotland and Northern England, excluding the Church of Wales from his review. The reason he gives for this exclusion is very surprising: "The fifth and sixth centuries in British ecclesiastical life were a time of decay, both externally and internally. That such a Church could have been the center of spiritual influence outside of its borders is hardly probable". The purpose of this article is twofold: to show, on the one hand, that Fr. Gregory is mistaken in his estimate of the British (Welsh) Church by reference particularly to the *Life* of St. David of Wales, and on the other, to provide further confirmation for the correctness of his main thesis, that the Celtic Church as a whole was integrally linked with the Orthodox Church of the East.

The Critics

One has to admit that the critics of the Church on the British mainland were eminently well-qualified. In his *Confession*, St. Patrick, while mentioning that he was from a clerical family (his father was a deacon and his grandfather a priest), has nothing good to say about the state of his native Church. Nearly a century later, the Welsh St. Gildas the Wise, in his *On the Ruin of Britain* laid into his native Church with extraordinary fierceness.

The British were an unruly lot, in his opinion. At the end of the Roman period they had "ungratefully rebelled" against "Roman kings", and had failed in their "loyalty to the Roman Empire". As for Gildas' contemporaries: "Britain has kings, but they are tyrants; she has judges, but they are wicked. They often plunder and terrorize the innocent; they defend and protect the guilty and thieving; they have many wives, whores and adulteresses; they constantly swear false oaths, they make vows, but almost at once tell lies; they wage wars, civil and unjust; they chase thieves energetically all over the country, but love and reward the thieves who sit with them at table; they distribute alms profusely, but pile up an immense mountain of crime for all to see; they take their seats as judges, but rarely seek out the rules of right

judgement; they despise the harmless and humble, but exalt to the stars, as far as they can, their military companions, bloody, proud and murderous men, adulterers and enemies of God… They hang around the altars swearing oaths, then shortly afterwards scorn them as though they were filthy stones…"

The clergy were hardly better: "Britain has priests, but they are fools, very many ministers, but they are shameless; clerics, but they are treacherous grabbers. They are called shepherds, but they are wolves ready to slaughter souls. They do not look to the good of their people, but to the filling of their own bellies. They have church buildings, but go to them for the sake of base profit. They teach people – but by giving them the worst of examples, vice and bad character. Rarely do they sacrifice and never do they stand with pure heart amid the altars. They do not reprimand the people for their sins; indeed they do the same things themselves. They make mock of the precepts of Christ, and all their prayers are directed to the fulfillment of their lustful desires. They usurp with unclean feet the seat of the Apostle Peter, yet thanks to their greed they fall into the pestilential chair of the traitor Judas. They hate truth as an enemy, and love lies like favourite brothers. They look askance at the just poor as though they were dreadful snakes, and shamelessly respect the wicked rich as though they were angels from heaven… They canvass posts in the church more vigorously than the Kingdom of heaven… They remain in the same old unhappy slime of intolerable sin even after they have obtained the priestly seat… They have grabbed merely the name of priest, not the priestly way of life."

Gildas spoke kindly only of the monks: they were "the true sons" who led "worthy lives". He mentioned "the habit of a holy abbot", "the caves of the saints", and how King Maglocunus, pondering "the godly life and rule of the monks", had vowed "to be a monk forever". And this leads us to believe that there was probably a sharp divide between the corrupt life of the secular rulers and married clergy, on the one hand, and the monks, on the other.

Moreover, this divide may have reflected, in part, a doctrinal divide, between, on the one hand, the Orthodox Christians, and on the other, the Pelagians, who, in their debates with St. Germanus of Auxerre are described as "men of obvious wealth".

Pelagianism was a heresy that denied original sin and over-emphasized the role of free will in salvation, and was condemned by Councils of the Carthaginian and Roman Churches.

Snyder writes: "What [Pelagius'] religious upbringing in late-fourth-century Britain was like we do not know, only that he was undoubtedly Christian and well educated before he left for Rome at the beginning of the fifth century. Pelagius's story is that of the Mediterranean world c.410, but the spread of his heresy after his disappearance in 418 directly involves Britain. Pelagian bishops were sufficiently influential in the British Isles to worry the pope and warrant the missions of Germanus

to Britain and Palladius to Ireland. Claims that Pelagianism played a political role in Britain's separation from Rome and subsequently split the island into factions have never been adequately demonstrated.…"

Monasticism

It is clear, then, that, on the one hand, the British Church had major problems, both doctrinal and moral, in the century and a half after the Roman legions left in 410, but on the other, that there was a powerful new movement in the shape of monasticism which would both take the lead in the struggle against Pelagianism and demonstrate an extraordinary striving for moral perfection rarely seen before or since.

The origins of Celtic monasticism are often ascribed to Gaul, not only because Gaul was the nearest place where monasteries are known to have existed in the fifth century, but also because the saints who made the biggest impact on the life of the early Celtic Church all had close links with Gaul. Thus St. Ninian of Whithorn (+397) built the first stone church in Britain in honour of his teacher, St. Martin of Tours. Again, the scourge of British Pelagianism, St. Germanus of Auxerre, was himself a Gallic bishop. And St. Patrick of Ireland, the first founder of monasteries in the Celtic lands, was trained in Gaul and received Episcopal consecration there. Moreover, it is tempting to ascribe the origin of the Eastern influences found in Celtic monasticism to the Gallic Church insofar as the latter had strong links with the Church in the East. Thus St. John Cassian, a Roman and a former spiritual son of St. John Chrysostom who travelled extensively throughout the East, eventually settled near Marseilles. Cassian's works, together with those of Saints Athanasius and Pachomius the Great (both Coptic monks), were well known both to St. Patrick and to the later monastic founders of Britain and Ireland.

However, Fr. Gregory has argued persuasively that while Eastern influence was exerted indirectly on the Irish Church through Gaul, there was also extensive direct influence from the Coptic Church of Egypt. Only such direct influence could account for a number of peculiarities of Celtic monasticism and liturgical life which distinguish it from Gallic monasticism but link it with Coptic monasticism.

In addition to the evidence Fr. Gregory produces to support this thesis, we may cite the strong evidence for direct trade routes by sea from the Eastern Mediterranean to South-West Britain. Thus in about 320 BC a Greek called Pytheas published his work On the Ocean, which described his journey through the Straits of Gibralter to South-West Britain and on as far north as the Orkneys, *ultima Thule*. In the first century BC, Diodorus Siculus describes the inhabitants of Britain who "are especially friendly to strangers and have adopted a civilized way of life because of their interaction with traders and other people", their main trade being in tin. He describes an island off the coast of Britain called Ictis, which most authorities identify with St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall. St. Michael's Mount was so-called because a fisherman had a vision of

the Archangel there in 492. It was visited by two of the early British monastic founders, St. Cadoc and St. Keyne. J.W. Taylor cites evidence that these tin-traders of South-West Britain were in fact of Eastern, probably Jewish origin; so that when Joseph of Arimathea came to this part of Britain after the crucifixion, he was following a well-worn trade route established by his own countrymen.

An interesting later (seventh-century) confirmation of the tin trade with the Eastern Mediterranean comes from the *Life* of St. John the Almsgiver, Patriarch of Alexandria. The captain of a ship from Alexandria laden with twenty thousand bushels of corn told of his journey to Britain: 'We sailed for twenty days and nights, and owing to a violent wind we were unable to tell in what direction we were going either by the stars or by the coast. But the only thing we knew was that the steersman saw the Patriarch [St. John] by his side holding the tiller and saying to him: "Fear not! You are sailing quite right." Then after the twentieth day we caught sight of the islands of Britain, and when we had landed we found a great famine raging there. Accordingly when we told the chief man of the town that we were laden with corn, he said, "God has brought you at the right moment. Choose as you wish, either one 'nomisma' for each bushel or a return freight of tin". And we chose half of each.'

Extensive evidence for a trade in tin with the Eastern Mediterranean, which was exchanged for the wine and oil essential for the celebration of the Church services, has been discovered during archaeological excavations at Tintagel, "King Arthur's Castle", on the North Cornish coast. Over three hundred imported vessels have been found. Some of the buildings excavated have been interpreted by some authorities as the remains of an early sixth century monastery founded by St. Juliot, and by others as the fortified seat of the rulers of Dumnonia (south-west England), including Mark and Tristan. Snyder writes: "Even if the settlement on the headland turns out to be thoroughly secular, there is still strong evidence of early Christianity at Tintagel. Thomas led two seasons of excavations at the Tintagel parish churchyard, which is on the mainland not far from the castle. His team uncovered two slate-lined graves, two rock-covered burial mounds, and one memorial pillar; associated imported pottery and a cross on one of the slates identify the site as early Christian (c.400-600)."

Again, John Marsden writes: "The eighth-century Irish Litany of Pilgrim Saints includes an invocation of the 'Seven monks of Egypt in Diseart Uiliag' – a site tentatively identified as Dundesert near Crumlin in Antrim – and raises the remarkable prospect of Egyptian monks finding their way to Ireland along seaways which had even then been known to Mediterranean navigators for three thousand years. Glass fragments of Egyptian origin and with no Roman connection have been excavated at Tintagel in Cornwall. They have been dated to the third century AD – which would make them almost precisely contemporary with the emergence of monasticism in Egypt – and must have been brought to Cornwall along the same sea-road which had been in regular use by Phoenician tin traders plying the Cornish coast as early as the sixth century BC.

"If Egyptian glassware could reach Cornwall in the third century after Christ, there is no reason why holy men out of the Egyptian desert should not have continued further along the same prehistoric seaway to make landfall in Ireland. If, indeed, they had done so, it would well explain why so many Irish hermits in search of retreat from the world should have been seeking a 'desert place' in the ocean, how variant Gospel readings known to derive from the Desert Fathers came into Irish usage, how Coptic textual forms found their way into the seventh-century Book of Dimma from Tipperary, and why the third-century St. Antony of Egypt features so prominently in the carvings on the high crosses at Kells and Monasterboice [and the Isle of Man]."

William Dalrymple has pointed out a very close resemblance between a seventh-century rock-carving from Perthshire depicting Saints Anthony and Paul of Egypt with an icon in St. Anthony's monastery in Egypt, and cites the words of the seventh-century *Antiphonary* of the Irish monastery of Bangor:

The house full of delight
Is built on the rock
And indeed the true vine
Transplanted out of Egypt.

"Moreover," he continues, "the Egyptian ancestry of the Celtic Church was acknowledged by contemporaries: in a letter to Charlemagne, the English scholar-monk Alcuin described the Celtic Culdees as '*pueri egyptiaci*', the children of the Egyptians. Whether this implied direct contact between Coptic Egypt and Celtic Ireland and Scotland is a matter of scholarly debate. Common sense suggests that it is unlikely, yet a growing body of scholars think that that is exactly what Alcuin meant. For there are an extraordinary number of otherwise inexplicable similarities between the Celtic and Coptic Churches which were shared by no other Western Churches. In both, the bishops wore crowns rather than mitres and held T-shaped Tau crosses rather than crooks or crosiers. In both the handbell played a very prominent place in ritual, so much so that in early Irish sculpture clerics are distinguished from lay persons by placing a clochette in their hand. The same device performs a similar function on Coptic stelae – yet bells of any sort are quite unknown in the dominant Greek or Latin Churches until the tenth century at the earliest. Stranger still, the Celtic wheel cross, the most common symbol of Celtic Christianity, has recently been shown to have been a Coptic invention, depicted on a Coptic burial pall of the fifth century, three centuries before the design first appears in Scotland and Ireland."

Professor E.G. Bowen believes that the whole of south-western Britain was subject to the influence of the Egyptian Church in the fifth and sixth centuries, and that the geographical situation of the main monastery of St. David (+589) would have made it a central point of diffusion of this influence: "We know that the early persecution of Christians in the Roman Provinces of Egypt and the Near East caused many there to

flee to the Desert. At first, they lived solitary lives practising extremes of hardship. Later, however, some came together in large or small groups for work and worship, and so renounced the World. They were visited in the Desert from time to time by leading Christians in the West and these, on returning home, set up their own monasteries in imitation of those of the Desert. Lerins, near Marseilles, and Ligugé, and Marmoutier, near Tours, are cases in point. The pattern of these Gaulish monasteries ultimately spread to Britain. Even more significant it would appear is the fact that modern archaeologists have been able to show that the lands around the Eastern Mediterranean, including Egypt, Palestine, Asia Minor and the Aegean islands were in post-Roman times in direct trade contact with south-western Britain. Certain types of wheel-made pottery clearly non-British in character have been found in recent years in Southern Ireland, Wales and the South-West Approaches. Exactly similar pottery occurs in such Eastern Mediterranean ports and depots as Tarsus, Athens, Antioch and Constantinople. The pottery concerned is of two types. Some are red coloured platters and table wares – classified as Type A and often stamped with Christian symbols, and secondly, Type B which are portions of amphorae used as wine containers, transporting wine from such centers as Rhodes and Cyprus and other Aegean islands. The wine was imported by little Celtic monasteries for use in the Eucharist and some, of course, reached the tables of the aristocrats. It is important to note… that the Western Mediterranean area is not involved – the sea route appears to have passé through the Straits of Gibraltar direct to Western Britain with the coastlands of the Bristol Channel being particularly involved. If this pottery could travel to the monasteries around the shores of south-western Britain (where many pieces have been recorded) so, too, could pilgrims, books, and ideas; so that there can be no longer any doubt that it was along these western sea-routes that full monastic life (found first of all, it would appear, in Britain at Tintagel on the north coast of Cornwall between 470 and 500 A.D.), arrived. The monastic pattern spread rapidly afterwards to such sites as Llanilltyd Fawr, Nantcarban, Llandaff, Caldey, Glastonbury, St. David's and Llanbadarn Fawr and other places in Wales before passing over to central and southern Ireland… Activity at St. David's must, therefore, have been intense at this time. Here the major land and sea routes met. It must have been a veritable 'Piccadilly Circus' in Early Christian times…"

The first full-length *Life of St. David* was written by Bishop Rhigyfarch of St. David's towards the end of the 11th century, only a few years before the Church of Wales became subject to Canterbury and, through Canterbury, to the heretical Roman papacy. As such, it represents a kind of "swan-song" of British Orthodoxy, a last witness to the greatness of the old Celtic traditions by one of its last independent bearers. Moreover, it provides clear evidence of the Eastern influence on Celtic monasticism in its peak period:

"Such an austerity did the holy father decree in his zeal for the monastic system, that every monk toiled at daily labour, and spent his life working with his hands for the community. "For who does not work,' says the apostle, 'let him not eat'. Knowing

that carefree rest was the source and mother of vices he bowed down the shoulders of the monks with pious labour, for those who bow heads and minds in leisurely repose develop a spirit of instability and apathy with restless promptings to lust.

"Thus they work with feet and hands with more eager fervour. They place the yoke upon their shoulders; they dig the ground unweariedly with mattocks and spades; they carry in their holy hands hoes and saws for cutting, and provide with their own efforts for all the necessities of the community. Possessions they scorn, the gifts of the wicked they reject, and riches they abhor. There is no bringing in of oxen to have the ploughing done, rather is every one both riches and ox unto himself and the brethren. The work completed, no complaint was heard: no conversation was held beyond that which was necessary, but each performed the task enjoined with prayer and appropriate meditation.

"Labour in the fields once ended they would return to the cloisters of the monastery, and they spent the whole of the day until evening in reading, writing, or praying. When evening was come, and the stroke of the bell sounded in the ear of any one, when only the tip of a letter or even half the form of the same letter was written, they would rise quickly and leave what they were doing; and so, in silence, without any empty talk or chatter they repair to the church. When they had finished chanting the psalms, during which the voice and heart were in complete accord, they humble themselves on bended knees until the appearance of the stars in the heavens should bring the day to a close. After all had gone out, the father remained alone to pour forth his prayer to God in secret for the condition of the Church.

"At length they assemble at table. Everyone restores and refreshes his weary limbs by partaking of supper, not, however, to excess, for too much, though it be of bread alone, engenders self-indulgence: but at that meal, all take supper according to the varying condition of their bodies or age. They do not serve courses of different savours, not richer kinds of food: their food is, in fact, bread and herbs seasoned with salt, whilst they quench a burning thirst with a temperate kind of drink. Moreover, for either the sick, or likewise those wearied by a long journey, they provide some dishes of tastier food, since it is not proper to apportion to all in equal measure.

"When thanks has been returned to God, they go to the church in accordance with canonical rule, and there they give themselves up to watchings, prayers, and genuflexions for about three hours. Whilst they were praying in the church, no one unrestrainedly dared to yawn, no one to sneeze, no one to spit.

"This done they compose their limbs for sleep. Waking up at cock-crow, they apply themselves to prayer on bended knees, and spend the remainder of the night till morning without sleep. In like manner they serve throughout other nights.

"From Saturday evening until daybreak at the first hour of Sunday, they give

themselves to watchings, prayers, and genuflexions, except for one hour after matins on Saturday.

"They reveal their thoughts to the father, and obtain his permission even for the requirements of nature. All things are in common; there is no 'mine' or 'thine', for whosoever should say 'my book' or 'my anything else' would be straightway subjected to a severe penance. They wore clothes of mean quality, mainly skins. There was unfailing obedience to the father's command: great was their perseverance in the performance of duties, great was their uprightness in all things.

"For he who would long for this manner of saintly life, and should ask to enter the company of the brethren, had first to remain for ten days at the door of the monastery, as one rejected, and also silenced by words of abuse. If he put his patience to good use, and should stand there until the tenth day, he was first admitted and was put to serve under the elder who had charge of the gate. When he had for a long time toiled there, and many oppositions within his soul had been broken down, he was at length thought fit to enter the brethren's society.

"There was no superfluity: voluntary poverty was loved: for whosoever desired their manner of life, nothing of his property, which he had forsaken in the world when he renounced it, would the holy father accept for the use of the monastery, not even one penny, so to speak: but naked, as though escaping from a shipwreck, was he received, so that he should not by any means extol himself, or esteem himself above the brethren, or, on grounds of his wealth, refuse his equal share of toil with the brethren; nor, if he should throw off his monk's robes, might he by force extort what he had left to the monastery, and drive the patience of the brethren into anger.

"But the father himself, overflowing with daily fountains of tears, and fragrant with sweet-smelling offerings of prayers, and radiant with a twofold flame of charity, consecrated with pure hands the due oblation of the Lord's Body. After matins, he proceeded alone to hold converse with the angels. Immediately afterwards, he sought cold water, remaining in it sufficiently long to subdue all the ardours of the flesh. The whole of the day he spent, inflexibly and unweariedly, in teaching, praying, genuflecting, and in care for the brethren; also in feeing a multitude of orphans, wards, widows, needy, sick, feeble, and pilgrims: so he began; so he continued; so he ended. As for the other aspects of the severity of his discipline, although a necessary ideal for imitation, this brief abbreviation forbids us to enlarge upon it. But he imitated the monks of Egypt, and lived a life like theirs."

The last sentence says it all: "he imitated the monks of Egypt, and lived a life like theirs." Celtic monasticism, not only in Ireland, as Fr. Gregory asserts, but also in Wales and Cornwall, and therefore also in Brittany, was an offshoot and imitation the life of the Coptic monks of Egypt. Of course, Davidic monasticism was of the coenobitic type associated with St. Pachomius of Egypt rather than the heremitical,

anachoretic type associated with St. Anthony of Egypt, which Fr. Gregory says was particularly popular in Ireland. However, the heremitical type of monasticism is also found in Wales. Thus St. Nectan of Hartland, whose sister Meleri was the paternal grandmother of St. David, set off to live the heremitical life in Devon, inspired by the example of the Egyptian saints: "It came into his mind to imitate Antony, the greatest of the hermits, and the other Egyptian fathers of godly living, by embracing the observances of the heremitical life".

We may also suppose that some of the Coptic elements that Fr. Gregory finds in the Irish liturgy came to Ireland via the monks of Wales. Thus in 565, write Baring-Gould and Fisher, "Ainmire mounted the throne as High King of Ireland. He was desirous of restoring religion in the island, as paganism was again raising its head, and there was a slackening of the Faith. He invited Gildas, David, and Cadoc to come to him and revive the flagging Christianity of the people. Gildas certainly went in response, but whether David did more than send a form of the Mass and some of his best pupils to engage in the work, we are unable to say. The Church of Naas, in Kildare, however, regards him as its patron, and presumably its founder. Near it are the remains of an ancient structure called by the people the Castle of S. David."

Eldership

If Rhigyfarch's *Life of David* represents the last literary flowering of Celtic Orthodox Britain, the *Life of Samson* by a monk of Dol, his Episcopal see in Brittany, represents one of the earliest, dating to about AD 600. Here we find another characteristic of Orthodoxy – eldership. Thus we read that the parents of Samson, Amon and Anna, were grieving because they did not have any children. But "the comfort of Almighty God came near. For Anna often gave alms and fasted together with her husband.

"Now it came to pass that on a feast-day they went to church, and there… heard a discussion about a certain Librarius, a learned elder who lived in the far north and who was sought out by many provinces, for people believed that what he told them would undoubtedly turn out as he said. At that moment many people in the church were eagerly making up their minds to go and seek his advice. When Amon heard this he joyfully resolved with Anna to make the same journey to the elder.

"At length, at the end of the third day of their tiring journey, they reached the place where the elder Librarius lived, and found him sitting with many people and discoursing at length on several particular cases. Then Amon and his wife came with gifts and fell down on their knees before the elder, begging him to give careful consideration to their case. He imposed silence with regard to the other cases which were causing a stir around him, and then, smiling all the time, closely questioned them as good people who had come a long way. 'O my children, tell me why you have expended such labour in coming so far.' Amon opened his mouth but shut it again joyfully when the elder said to him: 'I know the reason for your visit; it is because your

wife has been barren up to now. I believe that the Divine Compassion will come to her aid. But you make a silver rod equal in length to your wife and donate it on her behalf. Then Almighty God will raise up seed for you in accordance with His Will and in fulfillment of your desire.' At these words Amon joyfully said: 'I will give you three silver rods of her length'.

"The elder, seeing the prudence and discernment of Amon, made them stay with him in his guest-room until they had given their poor bodies a night's sleep after the fatigue of the journey. And so it came to pass that as Anna lay there God deigned to speak to her in a vision: 'O troubled woman, strong in faith, steadfast in the love of God and instant in prayer, blessed art thou, blessed is thy womb, and more blessed the fruit of thy womb. Lo! They firstborn son has been found worthy of the priestly office; for thy womb shall conceive and become fruitful and bring forth a son, and its offering will be seven times brighter than the silver which thy husband has given on thy behalf to God.' The woman rejoiced at the greatness of the vision and the glory of the angel of God who stood by her and spoke to her, and also at the prospect of the hoped-for child. Nevertheless, she was shy and, as is the way with good women, could not reply for modesty: 'Fear not, O woman,' said the angel, 'nor have doubts; for God will deign to comfort thee in thy grief, and thy tears shall be turned into joy for thee. Lo! Thou shalt have a child, and thou shalt call him, thy firstborn son, Samson. He shall be holy and a high priest before Almighty God. And thou shalt have proof of this in the morning, through that elder to whom thou hast come.'

"Awakening, the woman told everything she had seen and heard to her husband in order. As they rejoiced and discussed these things together, the sun rose; and as they had a long journey ahead of them, they rose early and she began to get ready and put on her clothes. Just then the elder appeared, shouting for joy: 'Blessed art thou, O woman,' he said, 'and blessed is thy womb and more blessed is the fruit of thy womb, for this last night the Lord has deigned to reveal things concerning thee and thy offspring. For thy firstborn son is ordained by God to be a high priest, and, when thou shalt give birth to him thou shalt name him Samson. Then, at the appropriate time, thou shalt hand him over to be educated. Of the British race there never has been, nor ever shall be, anyone like him, a priest who will help many people.' When they had received the elder's blessing, the parents returned home happy and contented."

The pattern of monastic saints acting as elders to married people that is so familiar to us from the Eastern Orthodox Church was also common in the West. Another example comes from the Life of St. Columba, Apostle of Scotland (+597): "Another time, when the saint was living on the Rechrena island, a certain man of humble birth came to him and complained of his wife, who, as he said, so hated him, that she would on no account allow him to come near her for marriage rights. The saint on hearing this, sent for the wife, and, so far as he could, began to reprove her on that account, saying: 'Why, O woman, dost thou endeavour to withdraw thy flesh from thyself, while the Lord says, 'They shall be two in one flesh'? Wherefore the flesh of thy

husband is they flesh.' She answered and said, 'Whatever thou shalt require of me I am ready to do, however hard it may be, with this single exception, that thou dost not urge me in any way to sleep in one bed with Lugne. I do not refuse to perform every duty at home, or, if thou dost command me, even to pass over the seas, or to live in some monastery for women.' The saint then said, 'What thou dost propose cannot lawfully be done, for thou art bound by the law of the husband as long as thy husband liveth, for it would be impious to separate those whom God has lawfully joined together.' Immediately after these words he added: 'This day let us three, namely, the husband and his wife and myself, join in prayer to the Lord and in fasting.' But the woman replied: 'I know it is not impossible for thee to obtain from God, when thou askest them, those things that seem to us either difficult, or even impossible.' It is unnecessary to say more. The husband and wife agreed to fast with the saint that day, and the following night the saint spent sleepless in prayer for them. Next day he thus addressed the wife in presence of her husband, and said to her: 'O woman, art thou still ready today, as thou saidst yesterday, to go away to a convent of women?' 'I know now,' she answered, 'that thy prayer to God for me hath been heard; for that man whom I hated yesterday, I love today; for my heart hath been changed last night in some unknown way – from hatred to love.' Why need we linger over it? From that day to the hour of death, the soul of the wife was firmly cemented in affection to her husband, so that she no longer refused those mutual matrimonial rights which she was formerly unwilling to allow."

The continuing vitality of the British Celtic tradition of eldership is witnessed by the story of the conversion, in about 995, of the famous Norwegian King Olaf Tryggvason through a Celtic hermit (possibly St. Lide).

As we read in the *Epitome of the Sagas of the Kings of Norway,* this hermit lived in the Scilly isles off the coast of Cornwall, "famed for his excellent learning and various knowledge. Olaf was eager to test this, and dressed one of his retainers like a king, so that under the name of a king he might seek (the hermit's) advice. Now this was the answer he received: 'You are no king, and my counsel to you is that you should be loyal to your king.' When Olaf heard this answer, he was yet more eager to see him, because he no longer doubted that he was a true prophet, and in the course of his talk with him… (the hermit) addressed him thus with words of holy wisdom and foreknowledge: 'You will be,' he said, 'a famous king, and do famous deeds. You will bring many people to faith and baptism, thereby profiting yourself and many others. And, so that you may have no doubts concerning this answer of mine, you shall have this for a sign. On the way to your ship you will fall into an ambush, and a battle will take place, and you will lose part of your company and you yourself will receive a wound, and through this wound you will be at the point of death, and be borne to the ship on a shield. Yet within seven days you will be whole from this wound, and soon you will receive baptism.'"

The thirteenth-century Icelandic historian Snorri Srurlason describes the sequel:

"Olaf went down to his ships and there he met foes who tried to slay him and his men. But the meeting ended as the hermit had told him, so that Olaf was borne wounded out to his ship and likewise was he well after seven nights. Then it seemed clear to Olaf that this man had told him the truth and that he was a true prophet from whom he had this foretelling. Olaf then went again to find the man, spoke much with him and asked carefully whence he had this wisdom by which he foretold the future. The hermit said that the God of Christian men let him know all he wished, and then he told Olaf of many great works of God and after all these words Olaf agreed to be baptized, and so it came about that Olaf and all his followers were baptized."

According to the *Epitome*, Olaf disappeared during a sea battle and ended his days in a monastery in Palestine, demonstrating thereby the essential unity of the Christian world at that time, from the Celts in the west to the Scandinavians and Slavs in the north to the Greeks, Syrians and Copts in the east and south. His story was fondly told by St. Edward the Confessor…

Kingship

The Irish king's invitation to the Welsh saints to revive the flagging Christianity of his people is an example of the characteristically Orthodox conception of the relationship between Church and State: not complete separation, but cooperation in the common task of the salvation of souls.

We find similar stories both earlier and later in British Orthodox history. Thus as early as the second half of the second century, according to the Venerable Bede, a local British king called Lucius invited Pope Eleutherius to send missionaries to England to revive the flagging faith of the Britons. Modern scholars tend to follow Harnack in dismissing this story as confusing the mythical Lucius of Britain with the real-life Lucius of Edessa. However, strong traditions about Lucius can be found in Wales, in Glastonbury (particularly), and in London; and it seems unlikely, as H.M. Porter points out, that a Syrian king should have turned for missionaries to Rome, 1500 miles away, when he could have much more easily referred to the great Patriarchate of Antioch only 170 miles away.

Again, in the early seventh century, we find a touching example of Church-State symphony in the relations between the holy King Oswald of Northumbria and the holy Bishop Aidan. As the tenth-century Abbot Aelfric writes, on the basis of Bede's *History*: "King Oswald became very charitable and humble in his way of life, and was bountiful in all things. With great zeal he erected churches and monastic foundations throughout his kingdom. It happened on one occasion that Oswald and Aidan were sitting together on the holy day of Pascha, and they brought the royal meats to the king on a silver dish. Then one of the king's nobles who was in charge of his almsgiving came in and said that many poor people from all over had come for the king's almsgiving, and were sitting in the streets. Then the king immediately sent the

silver dish, meats and all, to the poor, ordering it to be cut in pieces and distributed to each his portion. This was done, whereupon the noble Bishop Aidan with great joy took hold of the king's right hand and cried out with faith: 'May this blessed right hand never rot in corruption'. It turned out just as Aidan prayed – his right hand is incorrupt to this day…"

The close cooperation between Church and State in the Celtic lands may have been partly due to the fact that the chief men in Church and State were often related. Thus both St. David and St. Columba were of royal blood, and most of the first monastic missionaries of Cornwall were children of the Welsh Prince Brychan. Another factor may have been the very early introduction of the rite of anointing to the kingdom in Britain – earlier than in any other country with the possible exception (if we exclude the doubtful case of King Clovis of the Franks) of the anointing of the first Christian King of the South Arabian kingdom of Omir, Abraham, in the presence of St. Elesbaan, king of Ethiopia.

This raises the possibility that, just as Celtic monasticism appears to be, to a significant degree, an offshoot of Coptic monasticism, so the Celtic sacrament of anointing to the kingdom came from the same part of the world. This remains no more than an intriguing idea because of the paucity of evidence. However, we can be sure that the sacrament could not have come from Rome or Byzantium, because the Roman emperors were not anointed until, at the latest, the eighth century in the West and the tenth century in the East.

Unfortunately, the sacrament of anointing does not appear to have elicited great reverence for the king in the immediate aftermath of the Roman withdrawal from Britain. Thus in his On the Destruction of Britain St. Gildas refers to events taking place in the fifth century as follows: "Kings were anointed [*Ungebantur reges*] not in God's name, but as being crueller than the rest; before long, they would be killed, with no enquiry into the truth, by those who had anointed them, and other still crueller chosen to replace them."

But things improved later in the century with the appearance of Ambrosius Aurelianus, "a modest man, who alone of the Roman nation had been left alive in the confusion of this troubled period… He provoked the cruel conquerors [the Anglo-Saxons] to battle, and by the goodness of our Lord got the victory". His parents, according to Gildas, even "wore the purple".

And then, towards the end of the fifth century, there appeared the famous King Arthur, who, according to the Welsh monk Nennius in his *History of the Britons*, in one battle, at Fort Guinnion, "carried the image of St. Mary, ever virgin, on his shoulders and that day the pagans were turned to flight and a great slaughter was upon them through the virtue of our Lord Jesus Christ and through the virtue of St. Mary the Virgin, his Mother." In a later battle, at Mount Badon, according to the ninth-century

Annals of Wales, "Arthur carried the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ on his shoulder for three days and three nights, and the Britons were victorious."

Not long after this, in 574, the Irish apostle of Scotland, St. Columba, consecrated (by laying on of hands rather than anointing) the first Orthodox King of Scotland, Aidan Mor. The seventh-century Abbots of Iona Cummineus Albus and Adomnan both relate the story, according to which, when the saint was staying "in the island of Hymba [Eileann-na-Naoimh, in the Scottish Hebrides], he was in an ecstasy of mind one night and saw an Angel of the Lord who had been sent to him, and who held in his hand a glass book of the Ordination of Kings. The venerable man received it from the Angel's hand, and at his command began to read it. And when he refused to ordain Aidan as king according to the direction given to him in the book, because he loved his brother Iogenan more, the Angel, suddenly stretching out his hand, struck the saint with a scourge, of which the livid mark remained on his side all the days of his life, and he added these words, saying: 'Know thou for certain that I am sent to thee by God with this glass book, that according to the words which thou hast read in it, thou mayest ordain Aidan to the kingship – and if thou art not willing to obey this command, I shall strike thee again.' When, then, this Angel of the Lord had appeared on three successive nights, having in his hand that same glass book, and had pressed the same commands of the Lord concerning the ordination of that king, the saint obeyed the Word of the Lord, and sailed across to the isle of Iona where, as he had been commanded, he ordained Aidan as king, Aidan having arrived there at the same time."

The next year, St. Columba went with King Aidan to the Synod of Drumceatt in Ireland, where the independence of Dalriada (that part of Western Scotland colonised by the Irish, of which Iona was the spiritual capital) was agreed upon in exchange for a pledge of assistance to the mother country in the event of invasion from abroad.

It is perhaps significant that the earliest examples of sacramental Christian kingmaking come from parts of the world that were remote from the centres of Imperial power. Neither Southern Arabia nor Ireland had ever been part of the Roman Empire; while Britain had fallen away from the Empire. Perhaps it was precisely here, where Romanity was weakest or non-existent, that the Church had to step in to supply political legitimacy through the sacrament, especially since in these cases a new dynasty in a new Christian land was being created, which required both the blessing of the former rulers and a special act of the Church – something not dissimilar to the creation of a new autocephalous Church. Of course, this is just speculation. But it is by no means impossible that the land which brought the first Christian emperor to the throne – and the first rebels against the Christian empire - should have been the first to introduce the rite of anointing to the kingship as a grace-filled means of consolidating and strengthening Christian power.

Attitudes to Heresy and Schism

Britain appears to have escaped the heresy of Arianism, as well as the eastern heresies of Nestorianism and Monophytisim. However, as we have seen, the British Church had its own home-grown heresy in the form of Pelagianism. In the early fifth century, St. Germanus of Auxerre made two trips to Britain to help suppress the heresy; but it lingered on. Finally, in the late sixth century the British Church itself convened a Council to refute the heretics, as told by Rhigyfarch in his *Life of St. David*:

"Since even after St. Germanus's second visit of help the Pelagian heresy was recovering its vigour and obstinacy, implanting the poison of a deadly serpent in the innermost regions of our country, a general synod is assembled of all the bishops of Britain. In addition to a gathering of 118 bishops, there was present an innumerable multitude of priests, abbots, clergy of other ranks, kings, princes, lay men and women, so that the very great host covered all the places round about. The bishops confer amongst themselves, saying: 'The multitude present is too great to enable, not only a voice, but even the sound of a trumpet to reach the ears of them all. Almost the entire throng will be untouched by our preaching, and will return home, taking with them the infection of the heresy.' Consequently, it is arranged to preach to the people in the following manner. A mound of garments was to be erected on some rising ground, and one at a time was to preach, standing upon it. Whoever should be endowed with such a gift of preaching that his discourse reached the ears of all that were furthest, he, by common consent, should be made metropolitan and archbishop. Thereupon, a place called Brevi is selected, a lofty mound of garments is erected, and they preach with all their might. But their words scarcely reach those that are nearest, it is as though their throats seem constricted; the people await the Word, but the largest portion does not hear it. One after another endeavours to expound, but they fail utterly. A great crisis arises; and they fear that the people will return home with the heresy uncrushed. 'We have preached,' said they, 'but we do not convince; consequently our labour is rendered useless.' Then arose one of the bishops, named Paulinus, with whom aforetime, holy Dewi [David] the bishop had studied; 'There is one,' said he, 'who has been made a bishop by the patriarch, who has not attended our synod; a man of eloquence, full of grace, experienced in religion, an associate of angels, a man to be loved, attractive in countenance, magnificent in appearance, six feet in stature. Him I advise you to summon here.'

"Messengers are immediately dispatched, who come to the holy bishop, and announce the reason for their coming. But the holy bishop declined, saying: 'Let no man tempt me. Who am I to succeed where those have failed? I know my own insignificance. Go in peace.' A second and a third time messengers are sent, but not even then did he consent. Finally, the holiest and the most upright men are sent, the brethren, Daniel and Dubricius. But the holy bishop Dewi, foreseeing it with prophetic spirit, said to the brethren: 'This day, my brethren, very holy men are visiting us. Welcome them joyfully, and for their meal procure fish in addition to bread and

water.' The brethren arrive, exchange mutual greetings and converse about holy things. Food is placed on the table, but they insist that they will never eat a meal in his monastery unless he returns to the synod along with them. To this the saint replied: 'I cannot refuse you; proceed with your meal, we will go together to the synod. But then, I am unable to preach there: I will give you some help, little though it be, with my prayers.'

"So setting forth, they reach the neighbourhood of the synod, and lo, they heard a wailing and lamentation. Said the saint to his companions; 'I will go to the scene of this great lamentation.' But his companions said in reply; 'But let us go to the assembly, lest our delaying grieve those who await us.' The man of God approached the place of the mourning; and lo, there a bereaved mother was keeping watch over the body of a youth, to whom, with barbaric uncouthness, she had given a lengthy name. He comforted and raised the mother, consoling and encouraging her; but she, having heard of his fame, flung herself forward at his feet, begging him with cries of entreaty to take pity on her. Filled with compassion for human weakness, he approached the body of the dead boy, whose face he watered with his tears. At length, the limbs grew warm, the soul returned, and the body quivered. He took hold of the boy's hand and restored him to his mother. But she, her sorrowful weeping turned into tears of joy, then said; 'I believed that my son was dead; let him henceforth live to God and to you.' The holy man accepted the boy, laid on his shoulder the Gospel-book which he always carried in his bosom, and made him go with him to the synod. That boy, afterwards, while life lasted, lived a holy life.

"He then enters the synod; the company of bishops is glad, the multitude is joyful, the whole assembly exults. He is asked to preach, and does not decline the synod's decision. They bid him ascend the mound piled up with garments; and, in the sight of all, a snow white dove from heaven settled on his shoulder, and remained there as long as he preached. Whilst he preached, with a loud voice, heard equally by those who were nearest and those who were furthest, the ground beneath him grew higher, rising to a hill; and, stationed on its summit, visible to all as though standing on a lofty mountain, he raised his voice until it rang like a trumpet: on the summit of that hill a church is situated. The heresy is expelled, the faith is confirmed in sound hearts, all are of one accord, and thanks are rendered to God and St. David."

Sadly, only a few years later the Welsh bishops refused to cooperate with the mission of St. Augustine of Canterbury to the pagan Saxons. Some have seen in this a virtue, an early rejection of the papist heresy, and cite the following document of the Welsh Church: "Be it known and declared that we all, individually and collectively, are in all humility prepared to defer to the Church of God, and to the Bishop of Rome, and to every sincere and godly Christian, so far as to love everyone according to his degree, in perfect charity, and to assist them all by word and deed in becoming children of God. But as for any other obedience, we know of none that he, whom you term the Pope, or Bishop of bishops, can demand. The deference we have mentioned

we are ready to pay to him as to every other Christian, but in all other respects our obedience is due to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Caerleon, who is alone under God our ruler to keep us right in the way of salvation."

However, to accuse the Romans of papism in the seventh century is an anachronism: Rome, far from being papist then, was the most Orthodox of patriarchates. And the Pope of the time, St. Gregory the Great, even declared that anyone who accepted to be called "Bishop of bishops" was "a forerunner of the Antichrist"! The truth is rather that from 664, when the Welsh rejected the Synod of Whitby, they entered into a proto-nationalist schism for nearly a century before being brought back into Orthodox Catholic unity by Bishop Elbod of Bangor in 768. During this period they were regarded as schismatics by the Anglo-Saxon and Irish Churches. As an Irish canon put it, "the Britons [of Wales] are… contrary to all men, separating themselves both from the Roman way of life and the unity of the Church". Again, as St. Aldhelm of Sherborne wrote: "Glorifying in the private purity of their own way of life, they detest our communion to such a great extent that they disdain equally to celebrate the Divine offices in church with us and to take course of food at table for the sake of charity. Rather,… they order the vessels and flagons [i.e. those used in common with clergy of the Roman Church] to be purified and purged with grains of sandy gravel, or with the dusky cinders of ash.. Should any of us, I mean Catholics, go to them for the purpose of habitation, they do not deign to admit us to the company of their brotherhood until we have been compelled to spend the space of forty days in penance… As Christ truly said: 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish'."

However, the period 664-768 was an uncharacteristic interlude in the otherwise glorious history of the Welsh Church and of the Celtic Church in general. Much more characteristic of their attitude to the Orthodox Faith was the bold and uncompromising, but by no means self-willed or schismatic behaviour of the Irish Saint Columbanus of Luxeuil (+615) in writing to Pope Vigilius. The Pope was vacillating with regard to the heretical Three Chapters condemned by the Fifth Ecumenical Council, and St. Columbanus, after discussing the possibility that he may have fallen into heresy, continued that if he had, then those "who have always kept the Orthodox Faith, whoever these may have been, even if they seem to be your subordinates,… shall be your judges… And thus, even as your honour is great in proportion to the dignity of your see, so great care is mindful for you, lest you lose your dignity through some mistake. For power will be in your hands just so long as your principles remain sound; for he is the appointed keybearer of the Kingdom of Heaven, who opens by true knowledge to the worthy and shuts to the unworthy; otherwise if he does the opposite, he shall be able neither to open nor to shut."

"For all we Irish," as he said to another Pope, "inhabitants of the world's edge, are disciples of Saints Peter and Paul and of all the disciples who wrote the sacred canon by the Holy Spirit, and we accept nothing outside the evangelical and apostolic

teaching; none has been a heretic, none a Judaizer, none a schismatic; but the Catholic Faith, as it was delivered by you first [St. Celestine the Pope sent the first (unsuccessful) mission to Ireland], who are the successors of the holy apostles, is maintained unbroken."

Conclusion

In July, 1920 the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, together with the Russian Metropolitans Anthony of Kiev and Evlogy of Paris, came to St. David's in Wales to celebrate the dis-establishment of the Church of Wales. If this Church had truly been disestablished from heresy and thereby returned to its roots in the Celtic Church of the early centuries, there would indeed have been good cause of rejoicing; but sadly, that was not the case. However, the event did serve a most salutary purpose in proclaiming the oneness of faith of the Eastern Orthodox Church of the twentieth century with the Celtic Church of the sixth century, to which St. David, with his astonishing life so redolent of the feats of the Eastern monastic saints and strong links with the Eastern Church of his day, was perhaps the most vivid witness. It is therefore worth concluding by recalling another incident from the life of St. David (not recorded by Rhigyfarch's *Life* because it belongs to the tradition of another Church, that of Glastonbury) which witnesses to the fact that the Orthodox Church in the British Isles was closely linked with the Church in the East not only during the time of the flourishing of the Celtic Church from the fifth century, but much earlier, from the time when the Founder of our Faith Himself set foot "on England's green and pleasant land": "How highly St. David, the great archbishop of Menevia, esteemed that place [Glastonbury] is too well-known to need illustration by our account. He verified the antiquity and sanctity of the church by a divine oracle; for he came thither with his seven bishops, of whom he was the chief, in order to dedicate it. But after everything that the service customarily required had been prepared he was indulging himself in sleep on what he thought would be the night preceding the ceremony. He has submerged all his senses in slumber when he beheld the Lord Jesus standing beside him, gently asking him why he had come. Upon his instantly disclosing the reason the Lord restrained him from his purpose by saying that He Himself had long ago dedicated the church in honour of His Mother, and that it would not be seemly to profane the sacrament with a human repetition. As He was speaking He seemed to pierce the saint's palm with His finger and added that he should take it as a sign that he ought not to repeat what the Lord had done beforehand; but because he had been motivated by devotion, not impudence, his punishment would not be prolonged, so that, when he was about to say the words 'through Him and with Him and in Him' in the liturgy on the following morning, the full vigour of his health would be restored to him. The priest was shaken out of his sleep by these terrors and, just at the time he grew pale at the ulcerous sore, so later he applauded the truth of the prophecy. But so that he might not seem to have done nothing he quickly built another church and dedicated it as his own work."