



“Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No. 105 August 2017



Holy Martyr Oswald: King of Northumbria

Saint Oswald was born around 605, the second of the seven sons of the Anglo-Saxon king Aethelfrith, who was the first ruler to unite the provinces of Bernicia and Deira into the kingdom of Northumbria.

King Edwin of Deira refused to accept the Bernician control of both provinces, so he attempted a coup while Aethelfrith was away in the north. Edwin was defeated and driven into exile. When Aethelfrith was killed later, Edwin became King of Northumbria.

Oswald's mother Acha (Edwin's sister) fled to Ireland (then called Scotland) with her children. It is believed that during his seventeen years of exile, Saint Oswald received Christian baptism at Iona and also learned the Gaelic language.

Edwin was killed in 633 while fighting King Penda of Mercia and King Caedwalla of Cwynedd (North Wales). Eanfrith, Oswald's older brother, returned to paganism and was killed in battle against Caedwalla. Now Oswald had to lead the struggle against the Britons.

In 634 Oswald assembled an army and prepared to meet the forces of Penda and Caedwalla at Heavenfield (Hefenfelth) near the Roman Wall seven miles north of Hexham. On the eve of the battle, Saint Oswald set up a great wooden cross on the field. With his own hands, the king steadied the cross while his men filled in



the hole which had been dug to receive it. Although only a few of his men were Christians, Oswald ordered the army to kneel and pray to the true and living God to grant them victory.

“Let us now kneel down and pray to the omnipotent and only true God, that He will mercifully defend us from our proud enemy,” he told them, “for He knows that we fight in a just war in defense of our lives and our country.”

A modern replica of this cross now stands on the site, near the church of Saint Oswald.

The night before the battle, King Oswald had a vision of Saint Columba of Iona (June 9), who stretched his cloak over the sleeping soldiers and promised that the Saxon army would defeat Caedwalla the next day.

Following the battle, Oswald established his supremacy in Northumbria and his right to the title of Bretwalda (High King of England). He was godfather to King Cynegils of Wessex at his baptism, and married his daughter of in 635. By 637, Oswald’s authority was recognized by almost everyone.

For the next five years Britain was blessed with a rare period of stability. While governing his earthly realm, Saint Oswald also labored to attain a heavenly crown and to bring his people into the Kingdom of God. Turning to the Celtic monks of Iona, rather than the Roman clergy at Canterbury, Oswald invited missionaries to proclaim the Gospel to his subjects. The first bishop sent to lead the mission proved unsuitable, for he alienated many people by his harshness. The bishop was recalled, and an ideal candidate was found to replace him.

Saint Aidan (August 31) was consecrated bishop and sent to Northumbria to take charge of the mission. King Oswald gave him the island of Lindisfarne near the royal residence of Bamburg for his episcopal see. Saint Aidan also founded the famous monastery on Lindisfarne.

Since Bishop Aidan was not yet fluent in the Anglo-Saxon tongue, Saint Oswald would accompany him on his missionary journeys. The king translated the bishop’s words and explained the Word of God to his subjects, playing an active role in the evangelization of his kingdom. People flocked to receive baptism, drawn partly by Aidan’s preaching, and partly by King Oswald’s example of godliness and virtue.

Saint Oswald was a devout and sincere Christian who was often seen sitting with his hands resting palms upwards on his knees in a gesture of prayer. He granted land and money for the establishment of monasteries, and he was famous for his generosity to the poor.

One year, after attending the services of Pascha, King Oswald sat down to a meal with Bishop Aidan. Just as the bishop was about to bless the food, a servant came in and informed the king that a great number of needy folk were outside begging for alms. The king ordered that his own food be served to the poor on silver platters, and that the silver serving dishes be broken up and distributed to them. Aidan, deeply moved by Saint Oswald’s charity, took him by the right hand and said, “May this hand never perish.” According to tradition, Saint Oswald’s hand remained incorrupt for centuries after his death. Saint Bede (May 27) says that

the hand was kept in the church of Saint Peter at Bamburgh, where it was venerated by all. The present location of the hand, if it still survives, is not known.

Saint Oswald was killed in battle against the superior forces of King Penda on August 5, 642 at a place called Maserfield. He was only thirty-eight years old. Before his death, Saint Oswald prayed for the souls of his soldiers. This has become almost proverbial: "'O God, be merciful to their souls,' said Oswald when he fell."

Some identify the battle site with Oswestry (Oswald's tree, or cross) in Shropshire, but this seems an unlikely place for a battle between Mercians and Northumbrians. Others believe that Lichfield is the probable site. Lichfield means "field of the body," and was founded by Oswald's brother Oswy. The city was an archbishopric for seventeen years under Offa, who had a particular veneration for Saint Oswald.

Following the Battle of Maserfield, Saint Oswald's body was dismembered, and his head and arms were displayed on poles. Many miraculous healings took place at the site of the battle. This is not surprising, for during his lifetime Saint Oswald always helped the sick and the needy. Pilgrims took earth from the place where Saint Oswald fell, and many sick people were healed by mixing some of the dust with water and drinking it.

A year after his death, Saint Oswald's arms were brought to Bamburgh by Oswy, and his head was brought to Lindisfarne. There the grief-stricken Bishop Aidan interred it in the monastery church.

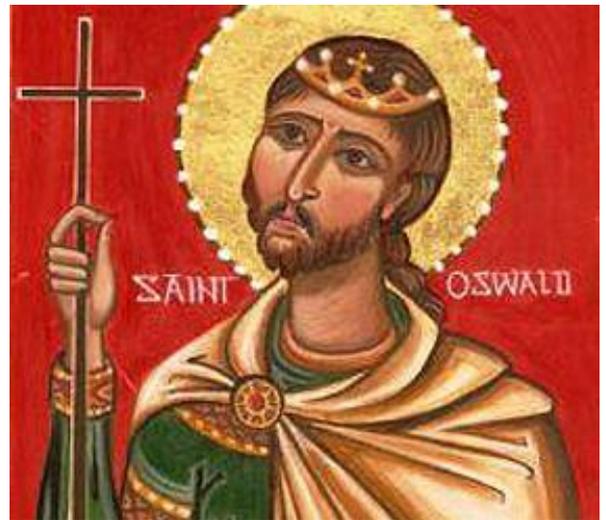
According to William of Malmesbury (twelfth century), Saint Oswald is the first English saint whose relics worked miracles. Portions of his relics were distributed to several churches in England and in Europe. Today Saint Oswald's head is in Durham Cathedral in Saint Cuthbert's coffin, but the rest of his relics seem to have been lost.

In December of 1069 a clergyman named Earnan had a vision of Saints Cuthbert (March 20) and Oswald. He described the king as being clad in a scarlet cloak, tall in stature, with a thin beard and boyish face. This is recorded by the historian Simeon of Durham.

In the Middle Ages, devotion to Saint Oswald spread from Britain to Spain, Italy, and Germany. Unfortunately, the fame of this most Christian king is somewhat obscured today, and his popularity diminished after the Norman Conquest in 1066. Before that, the Danish invaders destroyed many Anglo-Saxon political and legal institutions, as well as written records and oral traditions which had been preserved in the monasteries.

Though King Alfred the Great and even William the Conqueror were anxious to link themselves with Saint Oswald, the kings who reigned after the Conquest were less inclined to associate themselves to Saint Oswald's reputation as king.

Saint Oswald deserves to be better known, but he has not been completely forgotten. There are over sixty churches dedicated to him in England, and his name is also associated with several place names and holy wells. Saint Oswald is also commemorated on June 20 (the Transfer of his Relics).



Holy Martyr & King Oswald, pray to God for us!

Notes & Jottings

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

The short **Dormition Fast** commences on **Monday 14 August**. This leads on to the **Feast of the Transfiguration** on **Saturday 19 August**. We will be serving a Festal Liturgy at 10.10am followed by the blessing of grapes and other fruits. On **Bank Holiday Monday 28 August**, we will celebrate the Feast of the **Dormition of the Mother of God** with a Festal Divine Liturgy at 10.10am.

Looking further ahead, our **Patronal Feast** this year is on **Monday 6 November** at 10.10am. A festal liturgy will take place followed by procession around the church. **Founders Day** is on **15 November**. It is a Wednesday this year and is the seventh anniversary of the death of the Foundress. There will be the usual requiem services and memorial meal.

SPONSORED CYCLE RIDE

Ride and Stride (Cycle Day) organised by Suffolk Historic Churches Trust is on Saturday 9 September this year. The church will be open to receive the sponsored cyclists and sign their record forms.

CHURCH, COLLEGE etc

We would like to thank all who have donated books, furniture, incense and numerous items to both the church and the college.

Work is progressing with setting up the new candle-making workshop. Since this is in the grounds, out of sight of both the house and the church, it requires a lengthy new footpath to reach it. This has been cut out of the grass but it will require at least two loads of shingle. This will cost a minimum of £300 and maybe more if a third load is required.

St George Orthodox Information Service runs Olland Bookshop for the benefit of Mettingham Orthodox Trust. A lot of the stock has been advertised, and sold, through Amazon. However, Amazon has now introduced a new system which makes this less convenient. Thus, the decision has been taken to transfer the titles offered on-line to the AbeBooks website. We suspect that other booksellers will be making a similar move.

NAMEDAYS

We send congratulations to everyone who is celebrating a nameday at this time and wish them

MANY YEARS!

1 Aug – **St Seraphim of Sarov** – Serafima Hopper, Serphima Dembri, Seraphim Collins

4 Aug – **St Mary Magdalene** – Mary Tattum-Smith, Miriam Dembri

6 Aug – **Sts Boris & Gleb** – Boris Jermy, Gleb Jermy

10 Aug – **St Irene Chrysovolantou** – Irina Dembri

14 Aug – **St Cennydd of Langennith** – Kenneth Lock

21 Aug – **St Gregory of Sinai** – Priest Gregory Butler



COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD
JOY OF ALL WHO SORROW

AUGUST 2017

Saturday 5 August

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 6 August

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Martyrs Boris and Gleb)

Saturday 12 August

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 13 August

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (St Eudocimus & St Joseph of Arimathea)

Friday 18 August

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Saturday 19 August

10.10am ~ Hours and Festal Liturgy (Transfiguration of the Lord)

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 20 August

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Martyr Dometius)

Saturday 26 August

7.30pm ~ Vigil

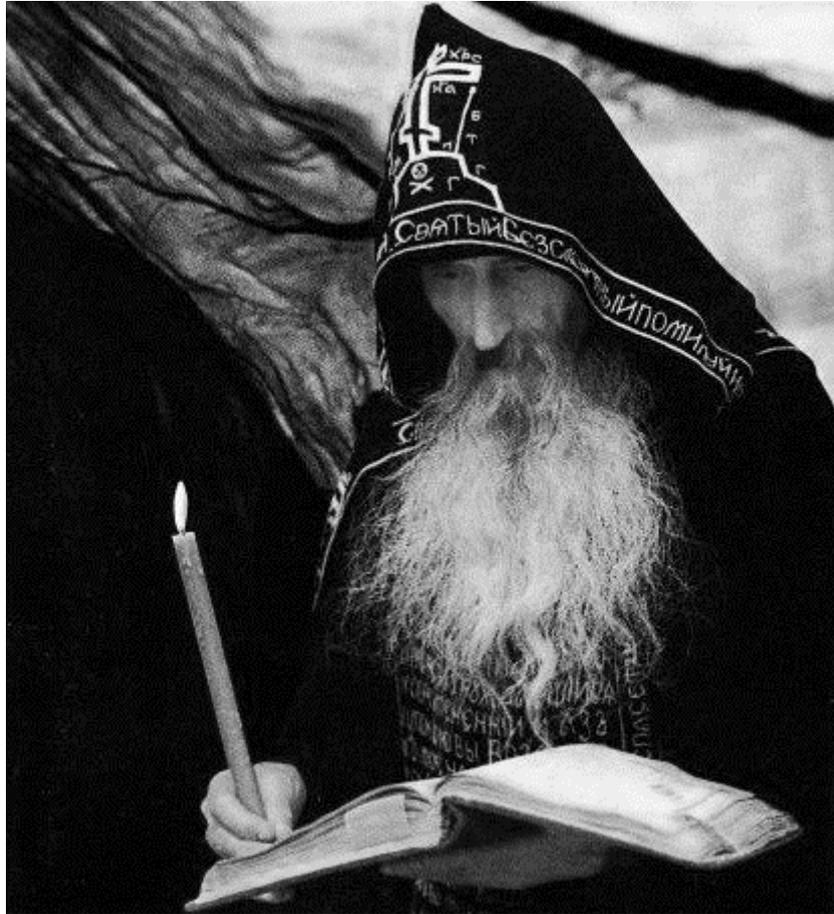
Sunday 27 August

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Forefeast of Dormition / Prophet Micah)

2pm – Burial Matins

Monday 28 August

10.10am Hours & Festal Liturgy (Dormition of the Mother of God)



People who are really brave are those who never despair.

St John Chrysostom

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