



Shrine of St. Edward the Confessor in Westminster Abbey



Saint Edward the Confessor

(1003 - 1066)

- Born in the year 1003, Edward was the first son of King Aethelred of England with his second wife Emma of Normandy.
- In 1013 Danish Vikings invaded England and seized the throne from King Aethelred. Prince Edward fled with his mother to the Duchy of Normandy, in northern France, where his uncle ruled as Duke Richard II.
- Prayed to Saint Peter that he might return to England so as to end the bloodshed and poverty that the constant fighting had caused.
- In 1042 St. Peter answered his prayers and Edward was named King of England on the deathbed of the last Viking king.
- King Edward was crowned on April 3, 1043 at Winchester Cathedral.
- In gratitude to St. Peter, King Edward immediately began construction of a great monument known as St. Peter's Abbey – more commonly called Westminster Abbey (Edward never lived to see the abbey completed).
- As King, Edward established fair taxes and helped the people of England recover from the bitter past 30 years of conflict.
- He gained a reputation as an unworldly and pious man. He was married, but never had any children.
- Upon his death in January of 1066, he bequeathed the Kingdom of England to Duke William of Normandy, who he had grown up alongside.
- The day of William's coronation (December 25, 1066) is the traditional founding date for the modern Kingdom of England.
- King Edward the Confessor is considered to be the last King of "Anglo-Saxon England", the predecessor kingdom to the modern Kingdom of England.
- After his death a cult formed around him, recognizing him as a truly just and kind ruler. This cult petitioned the papacy to recognize him as a Saint and in 1161 Pope Alexander III canonized him.
- Considered the Patron Saint of difficult marriages.



Saint Edward the Confessor

The King and the Ring – A Story of Saint Edward the Confessor

The royal carriage leapt into the air every time they passed over a bump – which was fairly often on this particular road. This area of the countryside had been devastated by the Viking occupations and many of the old roads, built by the Romans hundreds of years earlier, were falling apart. King Edward tried to adjust himself so the bumps didn't jostle him so much. He was returning to his palace after a trip out to Westminster to check on the progress of the new abbey he was building. It was just a small symbol of the gratitude he felt to God for all the gifts he had been given, but it was important nonetheless.

From his new position he could see out the windows of the carriage fairly easily and he looked at the countryside as it passed. It was mostly just trees, nothing too interesting. After all, southern England was basically one big forest so you couldn't really be surprised if all you saw was trees. Every now and then between the trees a small farmstead might appear, but most people lived in little towns spread across the country, or realistically in London where most of the population was concentrated. Edward didn't expect to see much out of the ordinary, which made it all the more surprising when he did.

Up ahead along the road he saw a bundle of rags lying along the roadside. Curious, he called to his coachman to stop the carriage so he could investigate. As he emerged from his carriage he noticed that the bundle of rags was in fact a man, laying along the side the road and covered in dirt. When the man noticed King Edward standing before him he immediately got on his hands and knees and kissed the King's feet, bowing before him. Edward commanded him to stand and asked his business lying along a roadside. The man explained that he was a poor beggar from a nearby village, whose farm had been seized by Vikings to support their large armies. He had nowhere to stay, so he waited by the roadside hoping someone would stop – but no one ever did.

King Edward was moved by this man, one of the many casualties of the fight for England his father and brothers had led, poor souls that he thought about every day and who haunted his dreams – who he had vowed to help through his kingship. Searching his mind for a way to help, King Edward found he had nothing he could give the man to help ease his pain. His clothing was of low quality and he wore no cloak, not seeing it fit to wear such extravagancies while many within his kingdom had nothing at all to wear. Like all kings, Edward was not wearing his crown as he only wore it during the feasts of Christmas and Easter and coins were of little use to him so he carried none. He had no jewellery save for one ring upon his finger. This ring was the symbol of his kingship, and all rulers would wear such a ring to show their power. Such a ring was irreplaceable, as it had been vested upon him at his coronation by the Archbishop. Barely thinking twice, King Edward removed his ring and offered it to the poor man standing in front of him. The man profusely thanked him and went about his way.

As he returned to his castle King Edward felt a sensation of peace throughout him. Returning to his chambers he was startled when he saw the same man from before standing in front of him. Baffled, King Edward did nothing as the man's features changed and he became a great angel of God. The angel told the King that he had showed kindness to a stranger who had nothing. He had given up his greatest possession with no reservations to help a man who was suffering. In return for Edward's kindness, the angel promised to watch over the Kingdom of England and to see it recover from the battles it had faced. For the remainder of King Edward's reign, England would have excellent harvests and see no major conflicts, internal or external, experiencing a 20-year period of peace and prosperity.