

Reflection Saturday Easter Week 3 St Erkenwald & St Mellitus 2021

St Erkenwald (- 693) or Erconwald was born near Grimsby, early 7th century. His father was the pagan king of East Anglia. Erconwald became a Christian at an early age through St Mellitus, the companion of Augustine. He converted and baptised his younger sister, Ethelburga, much to the fury of their father. Ethelburga eventually fled to escape being forced into marrying a pagan. In 666 Erconwald founded the monastery of Chertsey, in the reign of King Egbert of Kent. Shortly after, Erconwald founded a convent at Barking in Essex, as a refuge for Ethelburga. The foundation charter was countersigned by Hodilred, King of Essex. Erconwald remained Abbot of Chertsey until 675 when he was consecrated Bishop of London by St Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury. As Bishop, Erconwald was noted for miracles and for evangelization. He instructed St Neot and two Kings of Essex. He is believed to have died on 30th April, 693, while on retreat at Barking Abbey. He was buried in a common earthen grave. After a fire in 1087 his remains were translated to a splendid new shrine behind the high altar, where they remained until the Great Fire of 1666. He was venerated throughout the Middle Ages.

In the Acts Peter invokes the words of Jesus which also apply to St Erkenwald and St Mellitus: *'I have made you a light for the nations, so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth.'* Words that equally apply to us; to be a light for others that they may experience the salvation Jesus has won for them and so lovingly wants to share with them. St Erkenwald and Mellitus remind us of the great pastors who nurtured and developed the faith among the pagans just as Peter, Barnabas and Paul did so fruitfully. With the easing of the pandemic, we are called to be a light that draws people back to Church, to celebrate the faith as family and, hopefully, draw others in because of the life offered them seen present in our own lives.

St Erkenwald and St Mellitus pray for us.