

Reflection Wednesday Week 12 St Etheldreda 2021

St Etheldreda (also known as Audrey) (- 679) was born in Suffolk in the early 7th century. She was married twice but remained a virgin, and in 672 left her second husband, the King of Northumbria, to become a nun. The following year she founded a monastery of men and women, which she ruled as abbess, on the site of what is now Ely cathedral. She died there in 679. She was the most venerated of the women saints of Anglo-Saxon England, renowned for her dedication to a life of chastity and for the austerity of the regime she imposed on herself in her later years.

Encounters with God in the Old Testament are rather spectacular affairs, certainly not encounters experienced today. How can we recognise our encounters with God so as you respond to them? It is clear that saints, like St Etheldreda, encountered God by what Jesus calls *the fruits* of their lives. Generally, we only truly recognise the saints among us after they have died, even though we recognised the goodness of their lives while they lived.

We believe that civilisation today is more developed, more sophisticated, because our access to knowledge is vast and technical development moves forward with leaps and bounds. Yet we are less aware of God's presence than in the days of what we call more primitive societies. All because we have lost the essential connection we have with the land. 'Laudato Si' of Pope Francis is not just a call to heal our planet but to rediscover the connection we have with the land which offers a unique and essential understanding of our relationship with God.

As Etheldreda speaks to us of God, so does the Earth.

Creation points us to the Creator. The creature is not God— and God is not some unknowable spirit that is "one" with nature. The Almighty One is separate and above His creation. He alone is worthy of worship. One of the ways God has revealed Himself is through His creation. He has left evidence of his character, his goodness and his majesty for us to enjoy and worship.

Asked what the earth would say if it could speak, the response is *What God's Word says the earth declares!* The real question is not whether God is seeking to communicate through nature the question is whether or not we hear beyond the whirlwind to the reality of the still small voice, like Elijah!