

## Reflection Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> Week Easter 2023

**St Alphege** (- 1012) (Old English *Ælfheah*) became a monk at Deerhurst, Gloucestershire, about 970, and eventually Abbot of Bath. In 984 he became Bishop of Winchester and was known for his personal austerity and almsgiving. The king sent him to parley with the Danish raider Anlaf, which he did with such success that Anlaf never raided England again.

In 1005 Alphege became Archbishop of Canterbury. The Danes began raiding again and in 1011 besieged Canterbury and captured it. Alphege was imprisoned and an enormous ransom was asked for his release, which he forbade to be paid. On 19<sup>th</sup> April 1012, at Greenwich, his captors, drunk with wine, and enraged at the ransom being refused, pelted him with bones of oxen and stones, till one of them, called Thurm, dispatched him with an axe. He was buried in St. Paul's and became a national hero.

As an act of reconciliation Canute, king of Denmark, England and Norway, translated the body to Canterbury in 1023 and buried it near the high altar. Later Lanfranc confirmed the cult, and had a Life and Office written in his honour. Thomas Becket just before his death commended his cause to God and Alphege.

Like Jesus and St Stephen, Alphege freely placed his life in God's hands: *"Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."* Each of them was a shepherd in the example of Jesus, caring for the wellbeing and welfare of their flocks. Eventually, they each laid down their lives for them.

### **St Alphege:**

Addressing the Danish invaders, he said: *"Spare those poor innocent victims. Turn your fury rather against me."*

*"What reward can I hope for if I spend upon myself what belongs to the poor? Better give to the poor what is ours, then take from them the little which is their own."*