

## Reflection Friday 6<sup>th</sup> Week Easter St Dunstan 2023

**St Dunstan (909 - 988)** was a Benedictine monk, reformer and Archbishop of Canterbury. He was born near Glastonbury and educated at the abbey. He joined the king's household, but was soon expelled from court, accused of being a magician. Later he was ordained priest at Winchester. King Edmund took a great interest in Glastonbury, and when the abbacy fell vacant, he appointed Dunstan abbot. Dunstan set about restoring monastic life, almost extinguished under Danish invasions. In 995 his fortunes changed and he was exiled to Mont Blandin (Ghent), where he experienced a reformed monastery. Recalled by King Edgar, he became successively Bishop of Worcester, Bishop of London and Archbishop of Canterbury. He composed the Coronation Rite for King Edgar at Bath, the basis of the Coronation Rite still in use. This collaboration between King and Archbishop led to reform of the Church in England, largely through the monastic orders, and was later regarded as a 'golden age'. The promulgation of *Regularis Concordia* (c970) marked the success of the movement Dunstan had started in Glastonbury years earlier. With the king he made laws, administering justice and reforming the Church, and remained active until he died, at Canterbury, on 19<sup>th</sup> May 988. He was one of the most popular Anglo-Saxon saints, and many legends have grown up around him.

He is considered one of the three makers of England before the Norman Conquest: the others being King Alfred and King Athelstan. He was connected with the royal family of Wessex. He is the patron of goldsmiths and workers in metals. Having acquired many skills and being well-read, he frequently aroused opposition among his peers. He helped mark a turning point in the religious history of England. Dunstan was abbot for at least thirteen years. He added to and improved Abbey buildings and included the provision of workshops for arts and crafts. He reintroduced the Rule of St Benedict, with its disciplined way of life for monks and its insistence on stability, prayer (especially in choir), study and manual work. He wished to restore the ancient English tradition of Bede, Cuthbert and Aldhelm.

As archbishop he was not only the King's principal adviser but was free to work on monastic renewal. Throughout the reign of Edgar, known as "the Peaceful", Dunstan was at the king's side. After his death, he was immediately acclaimed a Saint. His last words were from Ps 110: *"The merciful and gracious Lord hath made remembrance of his wonderful works; he hath given food to them that fear him."*

Above all however, Dunstan was first and foremost a man of prayer. His earliest biographer wrote *"One thing at least I can declare, that although he had spent his years here below under the veil of flesh, yet in spirit, whether awake or asleep, he lived always above this world, for 'his homeland was in heaven'."*