

Reflection Friday 3rd Week Easter 2024

Today is the English feast day of **St Alphege**. Alphege (Old English *Ælfheah*) became a monk at Deerhurst, Gloucestershire, about 970, and eventually Abbot of Bath. In 984 he became Bishop of Winchester where he was known for his personal austerity and almsgiving. The king sent him to seek peace 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 were raiding once more and in 1011 they besieged Canterbury and captured it. Alphege was imprisoned and an enormous ransom was asked for his release, which he forbade to be paid. On 19th April 1012, at Greenwich, his captors, drunk with wine, and enraged at 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, in 1023 translated the body to Canterbury where it was buried 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.

St Alphege: *"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."*

"Spare those poor innocent victims. Turn your fury rather against me!"

Rowan Williams (former Archbishop of Canterbury) offers this prayer: *"You, God, must be passionate for the healing and the peace of my neighbours. You must care for their life, their openness to love and forgiveness. I bring them to you knowing what you want for them. I put them in your hands because I know you want their life. We know what you want for us and our neighbours".*