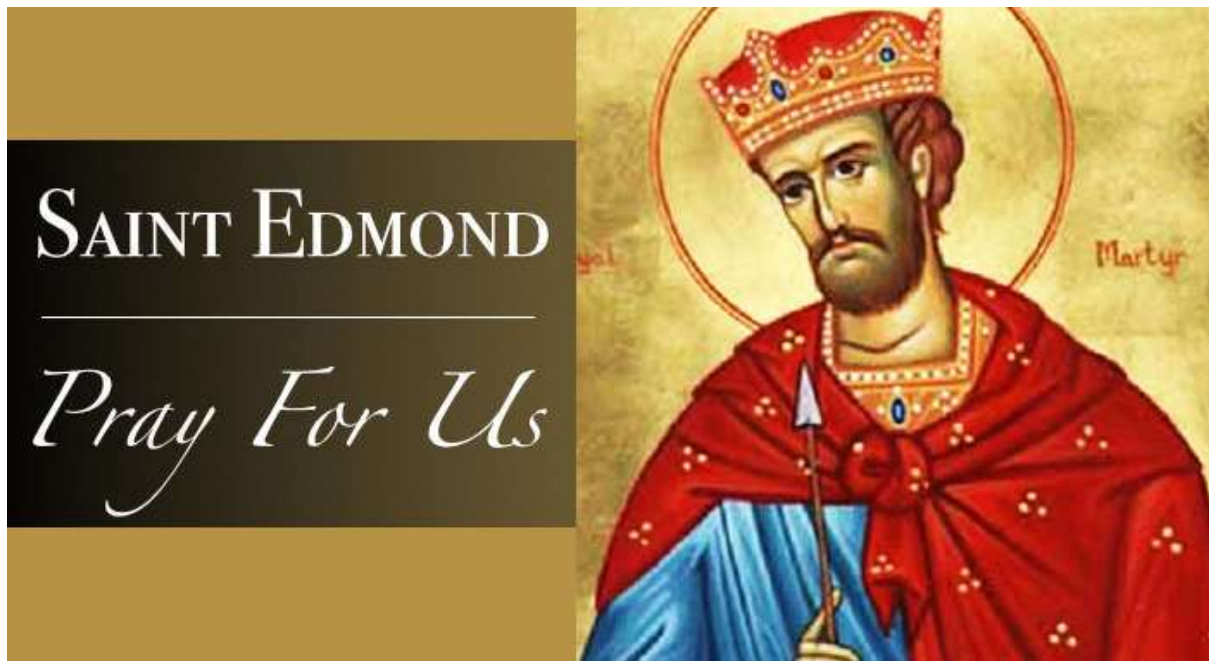


St. Edmund the Martyr



Martyred king of the East Angles. He was elected king in 855 at the age of fourteen and began ruling Suffolk, England, the following year. In 869 or 870, the Danes invaded Edmund's realm, and he was captured at Hone, in Suffolk. After extreme torture, Edmund was beheaded and died calling upon Jesus. His shrine brought about the town of Bury St. Edmund's. He is depicted as crowned and robed as a monarch, holding a scepter, orb, arrows, or a quiver.

Almost nothing is known about Edmund. He is thought to have been of East Anglian origin and was first mentioned in an annal of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, written some years after his death. The kingdom of East Anglia was devastated by the Vikings, who destroyed any contemporary evidence of his reign. Later writers produced fictitious accounts of his life, asserting that he was born in 841, the son of Æthelweard, an obscure East Anglian king, whom it was said Edmund succeeded when he was 14 (or alternatively that he was the youngest son of a Germanic king named Alcmund). Later versions of Edmund's life relate that he was crowned on 25 December 855 at Burna (probably Bures St Mary in Suffolk), which at that time functioned as the royal capital, and that he became a model king.

In 869, the Great Heathen Army advanced on East Anglia and killed Edmund. He may have been slain by the Danes in battle, but by tradition he met his death at an unidentified place known as Haegelisdun, after he refused the Danes' demand that he renounce Christ: the Danes beat him, shot him with arrows and then beheaded him, on the orders of Ivar the Boneless and his brother Ubba. According to one legend, his head was then thrown into the forest, but was found safe by searchers after following the cries of an ethereal wolf that was calling out in Latin, "Hic, Hic, Hic" – "Here, Here, Here".

A coinage commemorating Edmund was minted from around the time East Anglia was absorbed by the kingdom of Wessex and a popular cult emerged. In about 986, Abbo of Fleury wrote of his life and martyrdom. The saint's remains were temporarily moved from Bury St Edmunds to London for safekeeping in 1010. His shrine at Bury was visited by many kings, including Canute, who was responsible for rebuilding the abbey: the stone church was rebuilt again in 1095. During the Middle Ages, when Edmund was regarded as the patron saint of England, Bury and its magnificent abbey grew

wealthy, but during the Dissolution of the Monasteries his shrine was destroyed. Medieval manuscripts and works of art relating to Edmund include Abbo's *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*, John Lydgate's 14th-century *Life*, the Wilton Diptych, and a number of church wall paintings.