



St. Mildred of Thanet

July 13

St. Mildred was the daughter of King Merewald of Magonset and his wife, St. Ermenburga. At an early age, her mother sent her to be educated by an abbess at Chelles in France, where many English ladies were trained to a saintly life.

A young nobleman, related to the Abbess of Chelles, asked the abbess for her hand in marriage. Despite a favorable recommendation from the abbess, Mildred told her that she had been sent there to be taught, not to be married. All the abbess's advice, threats and blows failed to persuade Mildred from entering into marriage. Finally, the abbess threw Mildred into a hot oven. After three hours, the abbess opened the oven door expecting to find ashes, but instead, Mildred came out unscathed and radiant.

Hearing of the miracle, the faithful venerated Mildred as a saint; but the abbess threw her on the ground, beat, kicked and scratched her and tore out a handful of her hair. Mildred was able to send her mother a letter, enclosing some of the hair that had been torn from her head; and Queen Ermenburga immediately sent ships to fetch her daughter.

The abbess, fearing that her evil deeds should come to light, would not permit Mildred to leave. However, Mildred escaped during the night; but, having forgotten some ecclesiastical vestments and a nail of the cross of Christ; she managed to return for them and brought them home safely.

Upon her arrival back in England, she landed at Ebbsfleet where she found a great square stone, miraculously prepared for her to step on from the ship. The stone received, and retained, the mark of her foot and was afterwards moved to the Abbey of Minster-in-Thanet and kept there in memory of her. Many diseases are said to have been cured for centuries afterwards by water containing a little dust from this stone.

With her mother's consent, Mildred joined her at her monastery at Minster-in-Thanet. She was given the veil by Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, at the same time as seventy other nuns. Upon St. Ermenburga's death, Mildred succeeded her as Abbess of the community and set a holy example of patience, love and kindness.

An old story is recorded that one night, while Mildred was praying in the church of her monastery, the devil blew out her candle, but an angel drove him away and re-lighted it for her.

In 732, Mildred died at Minster from a lingering illness. She was succeeded by St. Edburga of Minster-in-Thanet. During St. Edburga's rule, the bell-ringer fell asleep before the altar. The departed Mildred awoke him by hitting him on the ear, exclaiming, "This is the oratory, not the dormitory!"¹

¹ www.o.ca.org