

ST. FURSEY'S ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY  
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COMMUNITY PROGRAMME  
MARCH 2015.



MARCH 25

The Annunciation of our Most Holy Lady,  
the Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary

*Dismissal Hymn. Fourth Tone*

**T**ODAY is the fountainhead of our salvation and the manifestation of the mystery which was from eternity. The Son of God becometh the Virgin's Son, and Gabriel proclaimeth the good tidings of grace; for this cause, we also cry to the Mother of God with him: Rejoice, thou who art full of grace; the Lord is with thee.

**BRITISH ORTHODOX SAINTS  
COMMEMORATED IN  
MARCH.**

( See selected lives of Saints on another page.)

- 01 Swithbert the Elder, Bishop of the Frisians
- 02 Chad, Bishop of Lichfield
- Cynibil, Confessor
- 04 Owen of Lichfield, Hermit
- 06 Baldred and Billfrith, Hermits
- Cyneburgh and Cyneswith, Abbesses of Castor and Tibba,  
Anchoress
- 07 Eosterwine, Abbot of Wearmouth
- 08 Felix, Bishop of Dunwich
- 09 Bosa, Bishop of York
- 12 Alphege the Elder, Bishop of Winchester
- Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome and Apostle of the English
- 13 Gerald of Mayo, Abbot
- 16 Aristobulus the Holy Apostle, Bishop of Britain
- 17 Withburgh of Dereham, Virgin
- 18 Edward the Martyr, King of England
- Egbert of Ripon, Confessor
- 19 Alcmund, Martyr
- 20 Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne and Wonderworker of Britain
- Herbert of Derwentwater, Hermit
- 23 Ethilwald of Farne, Hermit
- 24 Hildelith, Abbess of Barking
- 25 Alfwold, Bishop of Sherborne
- 27 Alkeld, Martyr in Yorkshire
- 30 Osburgh, Abbess of Coventry

**TROPARION OF ST. FURSEY.**

Establishing thy monastery in a Roman fortress  
thou didst teach men that the Orthodox Faith is  
a true bastion against the onslaughts of every evil  
force O Father Furse.

Where fore pray to God for us that we may all be  
bastions of the Faith standing firm against the rising  
tide of falsehood that our souls may be saved.





## SERVICES FOR MARCH.

SUN. MARCH 1<sup>ST</sup>. FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT The Sunday of Orthodoxy.  
( St.David of Wales, Bishop.601 )  
DIVINE LITURGY 10AM  
VESPERS 4PM

FRI. MARCH 6<sup>TH</sup>. The Discovery of the Precious Cross by the Empress Helena (326 )  
VESPERS 4PM  
SAT. MARCH 7<sup>TH</sup>. Memorial Saturday.St. Easterwine of Wearmouth (686)  
DIVINE LITURGY 10AM  
VESPERS 4PM  
SUN. MARCH 8<sup>TH</sup>.SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT St Gregory Palamas  
TYPIKA 10AM. VESPERS 4PM.

SAT. MARCH 14<sup>TH</sup>.Memorial Saturday. St. Benedict of Nursia (543 )  
SUN. MARCH 15<sup>TH</sup>. THIRD SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT Veneration of the Cross.  
St Aristobulos of the Seventy 1<sup>st</sup> Bishop in Britain ( 1<sup>st</sup> cent.)  
DIVINE LITURGY 10AM ( Blessing of Flowers )  
VESPERS 4PM

SAT. MARCH 21<sup>ST</sup>. Memorial Saturday. St. Enda of Innismore (c.530 )  
VESPERS 4PM  
SUN.MARCH 22<sup>ND</sup>.FOURTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT St,John Climacusof Sinai.  
DIVINE LITURGY 10AM  
VESPERS 4PM.

TUES.MARCH 24<sup>TH</sup>.Forefeast of the Annunciation  
VESPERAL LITURGY 7PM ( Fast from 1pm )  
WED. MARCH 25<sup>TH</sup>.ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.  
TYPIKA 9AM  
THUR.MARCH 26<sup>TH</sup>.AKATHIST OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS  
After the Bible Study in place of Vespers 4pm

SUN.MARCH 29<sup>TH</sup>. FIFTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT St Mary of Egypt ( 6<sup>th</sup>.cent,)  
DIVINE LITURGY 10AM.  
VESPERS 4PM.

## DAILY SERVICES AT ST. FURSEY'S CHAPEL

These are normally 3<sup>rd</sup>. Hour 9am with a reading from the early church Fathers,  
6<sup>th</sup> Hour 12noon, Vespers 4pm. Compline 9pm when visitors are in residence on  
retreat.Local readers are very welcome to attend these services especially during Lent  
when they have a more penitential character with the Prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian and  
the prostrations which are apart of it . It is printed below for your use at home.



## THE PRAYER OF ST. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN (c. 373 )

O LORD AND MASTER OF MY LIFE

GRANT NOT TO ME A SPIRIT OF LAZINESS, OF DESPONDENCY,  
OF LUST OF POWER OR OF GOSSIPING. (prostration)

BUT GRANT TO ME , THY SERVANT, THE SPIRIT OF PURITY,  
OF HUMILITY, OF PATIENCE AND OF LOVE.(prostration)

YEA O LORD AND KING, GRANT THAT I MAY SEE MY OWN  
ERRORS AND TRANSGRESSIONS AND NOT JUDGE MY BROTHERS  
AND SISTERS, FOR BLESSED ART THOU UNTO THE AGES OF AGES,  
AMEN. (prostration)

O GOD CLEANSE ME A SINNER(12 times with the sign of the cross and a bow  
each time then the whole prayer is repeated again with a final prostration)

Orthodox Christians use this prayer at home in their icon corner on weekdays in Lent  
but it can be used to great benefit by all Christians.

## COMMUNITY NEWS AND NOTICES

### THE THURSDAY BIBLE STUDY

This takes place in the library at St. Fursey's House 2.30pm Tea break 3.30pm Vespers  
4pm and we finish about 4.45pm. At the moment we are studying the Gospel according to  
St.Mark with the help of The Orthodox Study Bible with its commentary from the Fathers.  
Local readers are very welcome to join us especially as it Lent. I also like to encourage St.  
Fursey's people to do some spiritual reading at this time and there are many books in the  
library to choose from; anyone can borrow them of course.

### MARKET STALLS IN NORWICH.

Our monthly markets in Norwich will resume on Wednesday April 1<sup>st</sup>. 9am to 5pm. This  
is an important part of our Christian witness in this increasingly secular world so do  
please come and visit us if you can and also remember us in your prayers. We sell  
mounted icon prints, books DVDs prayer ropes, cards for various occasions. We are very  
grateful for the help given to us by Cennydd and Marina who come all the way from  
Walsingham.

### AN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN STALHAM.

We are still struggling to find some land; the possibility of obtaining a part of the Old  
Railway yard has come to nothing as it has been sold by the County Council for  
commercial development and the developer does not expect to do anything for a year. We  
are approaching Tesco again but they are in negotiation with N. N. D.C. about the  
development of the land they own and there is a possibility of progress but we shall  
have to be even more patient; meanwhile there are some other enquiries to be made so we  
persevere with the help of Almighty God; keep hoping and praying.



# Lenten Services



The weekday services of Great Lent are characterized by special lenten melodies of a penitential character. The royal gates to the altar area remain closed to signify man's separation through sin from the Kingdom of God. The church vesting is of a somber color, usually purple. The daily troparia are also of an intercessory character, entreating God through his saints to have mercy on us sinners.

At the Matins the long Alleluia replaces the psalm: God is the Lord . . . The Psalmody is increased. The hymnology refers to the lenten effort. Scripture readings from **Genesis** and **Proverbs** are added to Vespers, and the **Prophecy of Isaiah** to the Sixth Hour. Each of these books is read nearly in its entirety during the lenten period. Epistle and gospel readings are absent because there are no Divine Liturgies.

At all of the lenten services the Prayer of St. Ephraim of Syria is read. It supplicates God for those virtues especially necessary to the Christian life.

O Lord and Master of my life: take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power and idle talk.

But grant rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to Thy servant.

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own errors and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Vesper service which begins the lenten season is called the **Vespers of Forgiveness**. It is customary at this service for the faithful to ask forgiveness and to forgive each other. At the Compline services of the first week of lent the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete is read. This is a long series of penitential verses based on Biblical themes, to each of which the people respond: **Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me.** This canon is repeated at Matins on Thursday of the

fifth week. On Friday evening of this same fifth week, the Akathistos Hymn to the Mother of God is sung; and the Saturday Divine Liturgy also honors the Theotokos.

The first Saturday of Great Lent is dedicated to the memory of St. Theodore of Tyre. The second, third and fourth Saturdays are called **Memorial Saturdays** since they are dedicated to the remembrance of the dead.

On Memorial Saturdays the liturgical hymns pray universally for all of the departed, and the Matins for the dead, popularly called the **parastasis** or **panikhida**, is served with specific mention of the deceased by name. Litanies and prayers are also added to the Divine Liturgy at which the scripture readings refer to the dead and their salvation by Christ.

Saturday, even during the non-lenten season, is the Church's day for remembering the dead. This is so because Saturday, the Sabbath Day, stands as the day which God blessed for life in this world. Because of sin, however, this day now symbolizes all of earthly life as naturally fulfilled in death. Even Christ the Lord lay dead on the Sabbath Day, "resting from all of his works" and "trampling down death by death." (See below pp. 94) Thus, in the New Testament Church of Christ, Saturday becomes the proper day for remembering the dead and for offering prayers for their eternal salvation.





# Great Lent

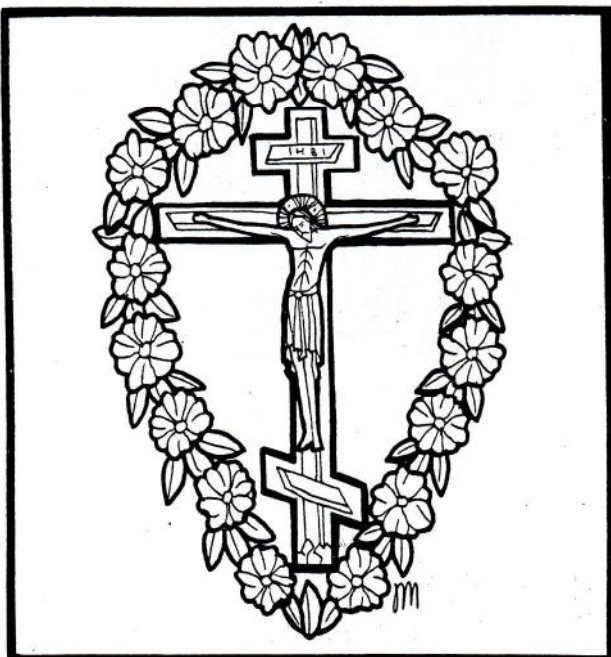
The season of Great Lent is the time of preparation for the feast of the Resurrection of Christ. It is the living symbol of man's entire life which is to be fulfilled in his own resurrection from the dead with Christ. It is a time of renewed devotion: of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. It is a time of repentance, a real renewal of our minds, hearts and deeds in conformity with Christ and his teachings. It is the time, most of all, of our return to the great commandments of loving God and our neighbors.

In the Orthodox Church, Great Lent is not a season of morbidity and gloominess. On the contrary, it is a time of joyfulness and purification. We are called to "anoint our faces" and to "cleanse our bodies as we cleanse our souls." The very first hymns of the very first service of Great Lent set the proper tone of the season:

Let us begin the lenten time with delight . . . let us fast from passions as we fast from food, taking pleasure in the good words of the Spirit, that we may be granted to see the holy passion of Christ our God and his holy Pascha, spiritually rejoicing.

Thy grace has arisen upon us, O Lord, the illumination of our souls has shown forth; behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the time of repentance. (Vesper Hymns)

It is our repentance that God desires, not our remorse. We sorrow for our sins, but we do so in the joy of God's mercy. We mortify our flesh, but we do so in the joy of our resurrection into life everlasting. We make ready for the resurrection during Great Lent, both Christ's Resurrection and our own.



# Sundays of Lent

Each of the Sundays of Great Lent has its own special theme. The first Sunday is called the **Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy**. It is a historical feast commemorating the return of the icons to the churches in the year 843 after the heresy of iconoclasm was overcome. The spiritual theme of the day is first of all the victory of the True Faith: "This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith." (1 John 5:4) Secondly, the icons of the saints bear witness that man, "created in the image and likeness of God" (Genesis 1:26), becomes holy and godlike through the purification of himself as God's living image.

The Second Sunday of Lent is the commemoration of **St. Gregory Palamas**. It was St. Gregory (d. 1359) who bore living witness that men can become divine through the grace of God in the Holy Spirit: and that even in this life, by prayer and fasting, human beings can become participants of the uncreated light of God's divine glory.

The Third Sunday of Lent is that of the **Veneration of the Cross**. The cross stands in the midst of the church in the middle of the lenten season not merely to remind men of Christ's redemption and to keep before them the goal of their efforts, but also to be venerated as that reality by which man must live to be saved. "He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." (Matthew 10:38) For in the Cross of Christ Crucified lies both "the power of God and the wisdom of God" for those being saved. (1 Corinthians 1:24)

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is dedicated to **St. John of the Ladder** (Climacus), the author of the work, **The Ladder of Divine Ascent**. The abbot of St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai (6th century) stands as a witness to the violent effort needed for entrance into God's Kingdom. (Matthew 10:12) The spiritual struggle of the Christian life is a real one, "not against flesh and blood, but against....the rulers of the present darkness....the hosts of wickedness in heavenly places . . ." (Ephesians 6:12) Saint John encourages the faithful in their efforts for, according to the Lord, only "he who endures to the end will be saved." (Matthew 24:13)

The Fifth Sunday recalls the memory of **Saint Mary of Egypt**, the repentant harlot. Mary tells us, first of all, that no amount of sin and wickedness can keep a person from God if he truly repents. Christ himself has come "to call sinners to repentance" and to save them from their sins. (Luke 5:32) In addition, Saint Mary tells us that it is never too late in life—or in lent—to repent. Christ will gladly receive all who come to him even at the eleventh hour of their lives. But their coming must be in serious and sincere repentance.



## IS destroy Armenian Genocide memorial church

SYRIA



Holy Martyrs Church before it was destroyed by IS militants last year (Ashnag, Wikimedia Commons)

After seizing the city of Deir al-Zour in mid-September, IS (Islamic State) militants laid mines around Holy Martyrs Church and blasted the important site. The church, which opened in 1991, marks the trek made by hundreds of thousands of Armenians and Assyrians to the city after they were expelled from their homes under the Ottoman Empire a century ago. The remains of many victims of the genocide were buried in the church compound.

## Progress made to overturn ban on non-Hindu evangelists

INDIA

In a positive move for believers, the Bilaspur High Court in India has been persuaded by Christian organisations to oppose a ban that prevents non-Hindu missionaries from entering villages in Bastar district. Christians in Bastar, Chhattisgarh state, are currently prohibited from taking part in non-Hindu religious activities following a resolution passed in May 2014.

## Prime Minister makes freedom of religion pledge

NEPAL

On 6 October the Prime Minister of Nepal, Sushil Koirala, pledged to uphold religious freedom in the country's long-awaited constitution. He made the assurance when addressing Muslims in the Hindu-majority country. This is a particularly welcome move for Christians as the new constitution, which is currently under discussion, contains a proposed "anti-conversion" clause that could limit their freedom to evangelise.

## Police raid homes in search of religious literature

UZBEKISTAN



It can be costly to own religious literature in Uzbekistan

Christians in Uzbekistan have been subject to numerous raids by police, incurring extortionate fines if they are found to be keeping religious literature at home. On 5 September, Artur Alpayev was fined 50 times the minimum monthly wage in Uzbekistan for storing religious literature at his home in Navoi. Christian literature, including Bibles, is banned from being stored anywhere apart from licensed church buildings and is liable to confiscation by the authorities.

## Displaced Christians return home to find homes looted

MALI

Believers have begun returning to their communities in northern Mali after they were driven from their homes in 2012 when Islamists took over the region. Many churches have been looted and desecrated, and the cities of Timbuktu and Gao were left with no churches intact. Properties and vehicles belonging to Christians were also damaged.

French troops liberated Mali's north in February 2013, and civilian rule was re-established. This has enabled the displaced Christians, many of whom had been living in difficult conditions in Bamako, to make the journey home.

## Six Christians released following arrest after worship service

LAOS

Six Christians detained after a worship meeting, including a three-year-old girl, were freed on 3 October. It was reported that Pastor Sompong Supatto, who was arrested with them, remained in custody, handcuffed and held in leg stocks.

The believers had been held in custody since 28 September, when the Boukham village chief, security officials and police officers arrived at Pastor Sompong's home and arrested the Christians, who were having lunch following a worship service. A week before the arrests, officials in Boukham, which is in Savannakhet province, had announced that Christians were no longer allowed to meet for worship.



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ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS

Small Vespers

On Lord, I have cried, *four stichera are sung*:

TONE FOUR

Taking pity upon that which He has made and bending down in His tender mercy, the Maker hastens to dwell in the womb of a Maiden, the Child of God. To her the great Archangel came, saying to her: 'Hail, O thou who art full of divine grace, our God is now with thee.<sup>1</sup> Be not afraid of me, the chief commander of the armies of the King. For thou hast found the grace that thy mother Eve once lost: and thou shalt conceive and bring forth Him who is one in essence with the Father' (*twice*).

Mary said to the Angel: 'Strange is thy speech and strange thine appearance, strange thy sayings and thy disclosures. I am a Maid who knows not wedlock, lead me not astray. Thou sayest that I shall conceive Him who remains uncircumscribed: and how shall my womb contain Him whom the wide spaces of the heavens cannot contain?' 'O Virgin, let the tent of Abraham that once contained God teach thee:<sup>2</sup> for it prefigured thy womb, which now receives the God-head.'

Glory be to the Father . . . Both now . . .

TONE ONE

(*by Byzas*)

In the sixth month the chief of the angelic hosts was sent to thee, pure Virgin, to declare unto thee the word of salvation and to greet thee, saying: 'Hail, thou who art full of grace: the Lord is with thee. Thou shalt bring forth a Son, begotten before the ages from the Father, and He shall save His people from their sins.'<sup>1</sup>



## HOMILY PAGE

From a letter by Saint Leo the Great, pope

(Epist. 28 ad Flavianum, 3-4: PL 54, 763-767)

### THE MYSTERY OF MAN'S RECONCILIATION WITH GOD

Lowliness is assured by majesty, weakness by power, mortality by eternity. To pay the debt of our sinful state, a nature that is incapable of suffering was joined to one that could suffer. Thus, in keeping with the healing that we needed, one and the same mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, was able to die in one nature, and unable to die in the other.

He who is true God was therefore born in the complete and perfect nature of a true man, whole in his own nature, whole in ours. By our nature we mean what the Creator had fashioned in us from the beginning, and took to himself in order to restore it.

For in the Savior there was no trace of what the deceiver introduced and man, being misled, allowed to enter. It does not follow that because he submitted to sharing in our human weakness he therefore shared in our sins.

He took the nature of a servant without stain of sin, enlarging our humanity without diminishing his divinity. He emptied himself; though invisible he made himself visible, though Creator and Lord of all things he chose to be one of us mortal men. Yet this was the condescension of compassion, not the loss of omnipotence. So he who in the nature of God had created man, became in the nature of a servant, man himself.

Thus the Son of God enters this lowly world. He comes down from the throne of heaven, yet does not separate himself from the Father's glory. He is born in a new condition, by a new birth.

He was born in a new condition, for, invisible in his own nature, he became visible in ours. Beyond our grasp, he chose to come within our grasp. Existing before time began, he began to exist at a moment in time. Lord of the universe, he hid his infinite glory and took the nature of a servant. Incapable of suffering as God, he did not refuse to be a man, capable of suffering. Immortal, he chose to be subject to the laws of death.

He who is true God is also true man. There is no falsehood in this unity as long as the lowliness of man and the preeminence of God coexist in mutual relationship.

As God does not change by his condescension, so man is not swallowed up by being exalted. Each nature exercises its own activity, in communion with the other. The Word does what is proper to the Word, the flesh fulfills what is proper to the flesh.

One nature is resplendent with miracles, the other falls victim to injuries. As the Word does not lose equality with the Father's glory, so the flesh does not leave behind the nature of



## SELECTED LIVES OF THE SAINTS.

**BOSA**, bishop of York 678-86 and 691-705. This monk of Whitby was consecrated by \*Theodore bishop of Deira (the southern half of Northumbria, roughly the equivalent of modern Yorkshire) when \*Wilfrid had been expelled from Northumbria following his quarrels with King Egfrith. Bosa ruled his diocese until his death except for the years of Wilfrid's restoration. \*Bede praised his 'singular merit and holiness'; one of his disciples was \*Acca, later the follower and successor of Wilfrid at Hexham. Feast: 9 March.

Bede, H.E., iv. 12; v. 19-20.

**EOSTERWINE** (650-86), abbot of Wearmouth. Of noble birth, he joined the service of Egfrith, king of Northumbria, and fought in his army. At the age of twenty-four he became a monk at Wearmouth, the monastery just founded by his cousin \*Benedict Biscop. Here he followed all the regular observance, taking his full share in the menial tasks. He milked the cows and the sheep, he worked in bakehouse, garden, and kitchen, he shared in the harvesting and winnowing. In 679 he was ordained priest and in 682 he was appointed abbot by Biscop to rule during his own absence. As abbot, he was kind and accessible to all, just as he had been before his promotion. He had the same food and sleeping accommodation as the rest of his community and joined in the manual work. He died at the early age of thirty-six, on 6 March, while the community were at Matins. He was buried by the church-door, but his relics, with those of Benedict Biscop and \*Sigfrid, were translated by \*Ceolfrith to a shrine close to the high altar. His cult was mainly local but his name also occurs in the OE martyrology from Mercia. Feast: 7 March.

C. Plummer (ed.), *Baedae Opera Historica* (1956), i. 364-404; ii. 355-77; J. F. Webb and D. H. Farmer, *The Age of Bede* (1983).

**ALKELDA** (1) (Athilda) (d. c.800). She was patron of the church of Middleham (Yorkshire), also of Giggleswick (West Riding). Edward IV's patent survives which enabled his brother Richard (subsequently Richard III) to set up the college of Middleham in honour of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Alkeld. Local tradition claimed that she was a Saxon princess (presumably a nun), who was strangled to death by Viking women and buried in the church at Middleham. Feast: 28 (27) March.

R. Challoner, *Memorials of Ancient British Piety* (1769), cv; Stanton, p. 135.

**WITHBURGA** (1) (Witburh) (d. c.743), virgin. The youngest daughter of Anna, king of East Anglia and a sister of \*Etheldreda, she lived as a solitary at Holkham (Norfolk), and later at East Dereham, where she is reputed to have founded a community and to have died before the buildings were completed. She was buried in the churchyard, but after fifty years her body was exhumed, found incorrupt and enshrined in the church.

In 974 Brithnoth, abbot of Ely, stole the body under the pretext that she would have wanted to be buried near her sisters. A band of his monks accompanied by soldiers went secretly by night to Dereham, having obtained the approval of King Edgar and \*Ethelwold. They removed the body to their wagons, drove twenty miles to the river Brandun, on which they continued their journey by boat to the dismay of the men of Dereham, who had pursued them by land and could only watch helplessly while their treasure slipped away. The body was reburied at Ely where, however, the incorruption story was never exploited, as it might have detracted from Etheldreda's glory. In 1102 Withburga's relics were moved into the new part of the church; in 1106 they were joined by the bones of the other three Ely saints (Etheldreda, \*Sexburga, and \*Ermeigild). The church at Holkham is dedicated to her; water in Withburga's well at Dereham churchyard was reputed to have sprung up when her body was first exhumed. Withburga's emblem in art, as on six Norfolk screens, is a tame doe, which William of Malmesbury described as her companion in solitude who provided her with milk. Feast: 17 March; translation 8 July.

**ALFWOLD** (d. 1058), monk of Winchester and bishop of Sherborne. William of Malmesbury recorded the following details, derived from a priest of his diocese who knew him. He was noted for his habitual abstinence at a time when self-indulgence was said to be general; he used at table common wooden platters and bowls. He was specially devoted to \*Swithun, whose image he set up in the church at Sherborne, and to \*Cuthbert, whose shrine he used to visit and whose antiphon he would often repeat. He quarrelled at least once with Godwin earl of Wessex, who was smitten with sudden illness and recovered only at the saint's pardon. After his death, the sees of Sherborne and Ramsbury, both poorly endowed, were reunited and in 1070 became the see of Salisbury. Feast: 25 March.