

St. Wendreda, Hermitess of March, Cambridgeshire, England



Commemorated January 22

St. Wendreda was the daughter of seventh-century King Anna, one of the earliest Christian kings. At a time when Christianity was putting down roots among the Anglo-Saxon peoples of England, St. Wendreda and her sisters, Etheldred and Sexburga, were enthusiastic missionaries spreading the Gospel of Christ.

Shunning the life of a princess, Wendreda dedicated herself to healing. She eventually settled in a small settlement called Mercheford, where some humble fisherman resided. Her sister, Etheldred, went on to found the monastery at Ely, while her other sibling, Sexburga, became abbess of a monastery in Minster.

Later, Wendreda founded a community at March, Cambridgeshire, dedicated to healing. She passed peacefully into the heavenly kingdom, and her relics, enshrined in gold, were buried in the Ely Cathedral.

However, in 1016, the relics were carried off in battle in the hopes they would bring victory. At the Battle of Ashingdon, the conquering Danish king, a pagan, seized the relics, but soon was converted to Christianity. He took the relics to the Canterbury Cathedral where they rested for the next 300 years.

In 1343, St. Wendreda was returned to March and enshrined in the church dedicated to her memory. The St. Wendreda Church stands to this day, and is world famous for its magnificent double-hammer beam roof along with 120 carved angels.