

A Synaxis of Latin Saints (Plain Reading)

May 27th

On May 27th we commemorate Saint Melangell of Wales. Saint Melangell was a 7th-century Irish princess who had dedicated her life to prayer. Her father, the king, had arranged for her to marry against her will. Wishing to preserve her life of virginity and prayer, in about the year 590 she fled Ireland and settled in the countryside of what we know today as Wales. There she lived a life of solitude and prayer. Nearly fifteen years later, in the year 604, Brochwel Ysgithrog, then Prince of Powys and Earl of Chester, encountered the young Melangell while hunting, when the hare that his hounds were chasing took refuge under her cloak. Seeing her, the hounds stopped. Brochwel tried to command them to go on, but Melangell defied them and they turned and fled. Brochwel had never experienced anything like this, and was keen to speak to the mysterious young woman. Struck by her beauty, he had hoped that she would marry him, but when he heard her story he was so moved and impressed by her determination and piety that he donated to her a parcel of land in the valley where she could live her monastic life among the wild creatures there.

News of her spread throughout the area and other women came to gather around her, forming a community there. They ordered their communal life on prayer and works of mercy, providing sanctuary to the poor and needy. Melangell was the mother to this community of women for the remaining 37 years of her life, and was often seen surrounded by hares during this time. After Melangell's death, her tomb became a place of healing, with pilgrims travelling for miles to venerate her relics and ask her intercession. Brochwel's successors decreed that the area must be protected as a place of solace for those in need of healing and restoration, as well as a place of refuge for the small animals, who were to remain unharmed.

Verses

On this day we commemorate Saint Augustine of Canterbury. Saint Augustine of Canterbury shares the title of Apostle of the English with St Gregory the Great. A monk at St Andrew's on the Coelian Hill, he was sent by St Gregory the Great with a group of forty monks to enlighten England. The missionaries landed at Ebbsfleet near Kent in 597. Soon Augustine had converted the King of Kent with thousands of his subjects. Consecrated bishop in Arles, he set up his see in Canterbury. He reposed shortly after St Gregory the Great.

By the intercessions of Thy Saints, O Christ God, have mercy upon us. Amen.