

ST. EDMUND OF ABINGDON

Today we celebrate St. Edmund of Abingdon, the Secondary Patron of our Diocese, and this feast gives us a chance to thank God for giving him to us and over the years for the many prayers he has assisted.

Edmund Rich, born in 1175, was educated at Oxford and Paris before returning to Oxford to teach. An academic – he wrote for instance several commentaries on Scripture – he was also a truly holy man, an ascetic; from his youth, he wore a hair shirt. It was at Oxford, in his mid-20s, he discerned a call to the priesthood and was soon ordained. His many talents recognised, in 1233 he became the Archbishop of Canterbury, a somewhat politicised role that immersed him in various disputes between the king and the pope. Indeed, it was on a journey to Rome in 1240 that he died at Soissy in France on this day. Devotion to St. Edmund spread quickly. He was canonised in 1246, the first Oxford don to become a saint. St. Edmund Hall Oxford is named after him.

Today's busy, secular culture tends to cut us off from the past, making it an alien territory. It makes us focus on the 'now' of the present moment or on what's to happen in the immediate future. Yet for us as Catholics, the holy women and men of the past are crucial, since God has raised them up as models to inspire us and people to be imitated. They make us think of Christ and the Love that streams from his Heart.

So today, let's remember in our prayers the new Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and let us pray for the unity of Christians. But let us also thank God today for all the blessings he has lavished upon us and on our dear Diocese of Portsmouth. Let's frequently ask St. Edmund to pray for us that we will never lack the wisdom, prudence and other gifts of the Holy Spirit we need if we are to face the challenges of the exciting times ahead.