

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Cedd

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: October 26

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IN BRIEF

Saint Cedd

Anglo-Saxon monk trained at Lindisfarne, bishop of the East Saxons and founder of Lastingham, who died in 664.

Feast day	October 26
Born	early 7th century, Northumbria, England
Died	October 26, 664, Lastingham, England
Canonized	Immemorial cult
Era	7th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Cedd for Missionaries and Unity

Novena to Saint Cedd

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Cedd

Saint Cedd was an Anglo-Saxon monk from Northumbria, trained by the Irish monks of Lindisfarne, who became in the seventh century the apostle of the East Saxons, in what is now Essex. A bishop and founder of monasteries at Bradwell-on-Sea, Tilbury and Lastingham, he served as interpreter at the famous Synod of Whitby in 664 and died of the plague that same year. The brother of Saint Chad, he is celebrated on October 26.

Who was Saint Cedd?

Almost everything we know about Cedd comes from Saint Bede the Venerable, who devotes several chapters of his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* to him. Bede drew his information from the monks of Lastingham, the monastery Cedd founded, which gives his account great value.

Cedd was born in Northumbria, the great kingdom of the north of England. He had three brothers, Chad, Cynibil and Caelin, who all became priests; Chad would also become a bishop and a saint. The four boys were trained at Lindisfarne, the island monastery founded by Saint Aidan, an Irish monk who had come from Iona. There they received the tradition of the Celtic monks: prayer, self-denial, the study of Scripture and itinerant preaching.

Key dates in the life of Saint Cedd

- **Early 7th century**: Born in Northumbria.
- **Youth**: Trained at Lindisfarne under Aidan and Finan.
- **653**: Mission to the Middle Angles with three other priests.
- **c. 653-654**: Consecrated bishop of the East Saxons at Lindisfarne.

- **Afterward**: Founds the monasteries of Bradwell-on-Sea and Tilbury, in Essex.
- **Late 650s**: Founds the monastery of Lastingham, in Yorkshire.
- **664**: Serves as interpreter at the Synod of Whitby.
- **October 26, 664**: Dies of the plague at Lastingham.

Missionary to the Middle Angles

In 653, Peada, king of the Middle Angles, became a Christian in order to marry a daughter of the Christian king Oswiu of Northumbria. He asked for priests to teach his people. Cedd was sent with three companions, Adda, Betti and the Irishman Diuma. Their preaching bore fruit, and many asked for baptism.

Bishop of the East Saxons

Soon afterward, Sigeberht, king of the East Saxons, who had been baptized at Oswiu's court, asked for missionaries in turn. Cedd was chosen. After a first successful mission, he was consecrated bishop at Lindisfarne by Bishop Finan.

He returned to Essex, where he founded churches, ordained priests and deacons, and established two monasteries: one at Ythancaestir, today's Bradwell-on-Sea, and the other at Tilbury, on the Thames. The little chapel of Bradwell, built on the walls of an old Roman fort, still stands today.

Bede reports a dramatic episode. A nobleman of the court was living in an unlawful marriage; Cedd excommunicated him and forbade anyone to eat at his house. King Sigeberht ignored the ban. Shortly afterward, this nobleman and his brother murdered the king, blaming him for being too forgiving toward his enemies. Cedd later baptized Sigeberht's successor, Swithhelm.

The founder of Lastingham

Cedd kept his ties with his native Northumbria. King Œthelwald of Deira gave him land to found a monastery where he could pray and where he would be buried. Cedd chose a wild spot in the moors of Yorkshire, at Lastingham.

Following the custom of Lindisfarne, he spent an entire Lent there in fasting and prayer to consecrate the place before building on it. He later entrusted the monastery to his brother Chad.

The Synod of Whitby and his death

In 664, King Oswiu gathered a synod at Whitby, in the monastery of Saint Hilda, to decide between Irish and Roman customs, especially the date of Easter. Cedd, who knew both traditions and spoke the languages of both parties, served as interpreter. The synod adopted the Roman customs, and Cedd accepted its decision.

That same year, a great plague struck England. Cedd died of it at Lastingham on October 26, 664. Bede tells that when news of his death reached Essex, about thirty of his monks came to Lastingham to live and die near his tomb; all of them died of the plague except one young boy. Cedd was first buried in the open air, and later in the stone church built there.

Why is Saint Cedd honored in Essex and Yorkshire?

Cedd has no official patronage, but two regions of England keep his memory alive. In Essex he was the first bishop of the East Saxons and planted the Church there; the Anglican cathedral of Chelmsford is dedicated to Saint Mary, Saint Peter and Saint Cedd. In Yorkshire, Lastingham was his chosen place of prayer and his burial place. Christians of different traditions in England look to him as a missionary and a builder of unity.

What can we learn from Saint Cedd?

Cedd was a bridge between peoples and traditions. Formed by Irish monks, he brought the Gospel to the East Saxons, then helped the Church in England find its unity at Whitby by accepting a decision that changed the customs he had grown up with. His little chapel at Bradwell, still standing after more than thirteen centuries, bears witness to the strength of his work. He can be invoked for missionaries, for Christian unity and for the Church in England.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Cedd in art

Cedd is generally shown as a bishop, with miter and crozier, sometimes holding a small church that recalls the chapel of Bradwell or the monastery of Lastingham. He is often depicted in modern stained glass in Essex and Yorkshire, and sometimes alongside his brother Chad.

Where to pray to Saint Cedd

- **Bradwell-on-Sea** (Essex): the Chapel of Saint Peter-on-the-Wall, the last remnant of his monastery, which still draws pilgrims.
- **Lastingham** (North Yorkshire): Saint Mary's Church and its crypt, on the site of his monastery and tomb.
- **Chelmsford** (Essex): the Anglican cathedral dedicated to Saint Mary, Saint Peter and Saint Cedd.

To pray with him, Saintspedia offers a prayer to Saint Cedd and a novena to Saint Cedd ending on October 26.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Cedd for Missionaries and Unity

Saint Cedd is remembered in Essex and Yorkshire, but there is no single traditional prayer to him in wide use. Saintspedia offers an original prayer inspired by his life as told by Saint Bede: the monk of Lindisfarne, the bishop of the East Saxons, the founder who prayed through a whole Lent before building Lastingham, and the interpreter of Whitby who served the unity of the Church.

Prayer to Saint Cedd

Saint Cedd, monk of Lindisfarne and apostle of the East Saxons, you left your homeland to bring the Gospel to people who did not yet know Christ. Give me a heart ready to share my faith with simplicity and courage.

Before building Lastingham, you spent a whole Lent in fasting and prayer. Teach me to begin every work with God, and to make room for silence before I act.

At Whitby you put your gifts at the service of understanding between brothers. Help me to listen, to build bridges, and to seek the unity of the Church more than my own preferences.

Watch over missionaries, over the Church in England, and over all who carry the Gospel to new places.

I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence). Saint Cedd, pray for us. Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

A prayer for the beginning of a work

Inspired by the Lent Cedd spent at Lastingham, this short prayer can be said before starting a project, a new job or the founding of a group:

> *Lord, like Saint Cedd at Lastingham, I place this new work in your hands before I begin. Purify my intentions, bless what I will build, and let it serve your glory and the good of others. Amen.*

When to pray this prayer

The feast of Saint Cedd is October 26. You can pray to him:

- for missionaries and those who announce the Gospel;
- before starting a new project or community;
- for unity among Christians and for dialogue in the Church;
- for the Church in Essex, Yorkshire and all of England;
- for those suffering in times of epidemic, remembering that he died of the plague.

To learn more about him, read the life of Saint Cedd, or pray the novena to Saint Cedd.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Cedd

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Cedd as told by Saint Bede the Venerable. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, October 26, begin it on October 18. It can also be prayed at any time, especially for missionaries, for a new project or for the unity of Christians.

How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the short meditation, then say the prayer of the day followed by an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The small act suggested for the day helps you live in Saint Cedd's spirit of prayer, mission and unity. You can pray alone, with your family or with a parish group. If you miss a day, simply continue the next day.

The nine days follow his path as Bede describes it: his family and his formation at Lindisfarne, his missions to the Middle Angles and the East Saxons, the founding of Lastingham, the Synod of Whitby, and his death in the year of the great plague. Each step offers a light for our own Christian life, whether we are beginning something new, facing conflict, or caring for the sick.

Day 1: A family given to God

Cedd and his three brothers, Chad, Cynibil and Caelin, all became priests. Faith was handed on among them like a family treasure. Every family can become a place where vocations are born.

Prayer: Lord, bless my family. Make our home a place where faith is lived and passed on.

Today: Pray together with a member of your family, even briefly.

Day 2: The school of Lindisfarne

At Lindisfarne, Cedd learned from Saint Aidan and his monks to pray, to fast, to study Scripture and to preach on foot. These simple practices shaped his whole life.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to pray and to love your Word. Make my faith simple and strong.

Today: Read a chapter of one of the Gospels slowly.

Day 3: Sent to the Middle Angles

In 653, Cedd was sent with three companions to the Middle Angles, whose king had asked for teachers of the faith. Mission is never a solitary work; it is carried by brothers together.

Prayer: Lord, bless all missionaries. Give them good companions and fruitful work.

Today: Offer a gift or a prayer for a missionary or a mission society.

Day 4: Bishop of the East Saxons

Consecrated bishop at Lindisfarne, Cedd returned to Essex, where he built churches and ordained priests and deacons. He planted the Church patiently, one community at a time.

Prayer: Lord, bless our bishop, our priests and our deacons. Make them faithful shepherds.

Today: Pray by name for your parish priest and your bishop.

Day 5: Courage to speak the truth

Cedd did not hesitate to rebuke a powerful nobleman who was living in an unlawful marriage, even when the king ignored his warning. Faithfulness sometimes demands the courage to say what others do not want to hear.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to speak the truth with charity, and the humility to hear it from others.

Today: Be honest in a situation where it would be easier to stay silent, always with gentleness.

Day 6: A Lent at Lastingham

Before building his monastery at Lastingham, Cedd spent a whole Lent in fasting and prayer to consecrate the place to God. He knew that what is built without prayer does not last.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the work I am beginning. Let it be founded on you.

Today: Take ten minutes of silence before an important task and offer it to God.

Day 7: The interpreter of Whitby

At the Synod of Whitby in 664, Cedd translated for both sides, Irish and Roman. He helped brothers understand one another, and then accepted the decision of the synod, even though it changed customs he had grown up with.

Prayer: Lord, make me a servant of understanding. Heal the divisions among Christians.

Today: Listen fully to someone with whom you disagree, without interrupting.

Day 8: Death in a time of plague

The same year, a great plague struck England, and Cedd died of it at Lastingham on October 26, 664. He met death where he had chosen to pray, in the place he had given to God.

Prayer: Lord, protect the sick and those who care for them. Give peace to the dying and comfort to those who mourn.

Today: Pray for someone who is ill, or send them a word of support.

Day 9: The love of his monks

Bede tells that about thirty of Cedd's monks from Essex came to Lastingham to live near his tomb. Their love shows the kind of father he had been. Holiness leaves behind a community that keeps the flame alive.

Prayer: Lord, through the intercession of Saint Cedd, make our communities places of faith, fraternity and mission.

Today: Do something concrete for your parish or Christian community.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Cedd, apostle of the East Saxons and founder of Lastingham, you announced Christ with courage, built with prayer and served the unity of the Church. Present to God the intention I have carried during these nine days. Obtain for the Church in England and throughout the world faithful missionaries, humble pastors and Christians who seek unity. Help me to begin every work with God and to finish it in his peace. Amen.*

To continue praying with him, use the prayer to Saint Cedd, or read his life.

Credits and sources

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