

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Chad of Mercia

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: March 2

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IN BRIEF

Saint Chad of Mercia

Anglo-Saxon monk trained at Lindisfarne, bishop of the Mercians at Lichfield in the seventh century.

Feast day	March 2
Born	Northumbria (England)
Died	March 2, 672, Lichfield, England
Canonized	Immemorial cult
Era	7th century
Patron saint of	Mercia, Lichfield

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Chad for Humility

Novena to Saint Chad of Mercia

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Chad of Mercia

Saint Chad, in Old English Ceadda, was an Anglo-Saxon monk and bishop of the seventh century, trained at Lindisfarne. First made bishop of the Northumbrians, he humbly stepped aside when his appointment was judged irregular, and then became the first bishop of the Mercians to have his seat at Lichfield. Saint Bede the Venerable praises his gentleness and holiness. He probably died on March 2, 672, and his feast day is March 2.

Who was Saint Chad?

Chad came from Northumbria, the Anglo-Saxon kingdom in the north of England. He belonged to a remarkable family of brothers: with them, including Saint Cedd, he was one of the fruits of the mission that came from Ireland and Scotland with Saint Aidan, founder of the monastery of Lindisfarne. Chad studied there, then spent time in Ireland, a land of many monasteries, before joining his brother Cedd, abbot of Lastingham.

Almost everything we know about him comes from the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* by Saint Bede the Venerable, written a few decades after his death. Bede, who received his information from monks who had known Chad, paints the portrait of a humble, studious pastor wholly given to his mission.

Key dates in the life of Saint Chad

- **7th century**: Born in Northumbria.
- **Youth**: Studies at Lindisfarne, then stays in Ireland.
- **664**: His brother Cedd dies of the plague; Chad succeeds him as abbot of Lastingham.
- **664**: King Oswiu has him made bishop of the Northumbrians.

- **669**: Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury judges his appointment irregular; Chad withdraws.
- **669**: Theodore names him bishop of the Mercians, with his seat at Lichfield.
- **March 2, 672**: Dies at Lichfield, according to the most likely date.

A bishop who accepted being set aside

In 664 Chad succeeded his brother as head of the monastery of Lastingham. That same year, King Oswiu of Northumbria had him appointed bishop of his kingdom. Yet the see had been intended for Saint Wilfrid, who had gone to Gaul to receive episcopal ordination and was delayed in returning. This created a double appointment, and Chad's own consecration was considered questionable.

In 669 the new archbishop of Canterbury, Saint Theodore of Tarsus, sent from Rome to reorganize the Church in England, declared Chad's appointment irregular. According to Bede, Chad answered without bitterness: if his ordination had not been done properly, he would gladly step down, for he had never thought himself worthy of the office and had accepted it only out of obedience. Moved by this humility, Theodore himself completed his ordination according to the rules and, soon afterward, named him bishop of the Mercians.

Bishop of Lichfield

Chad settled at Lichfield, at the heart of the kingdom of Mercia, in the Midlands of England. Faithful to the ways of his Irish teachers, he was accustomed to travel through his diocese on foot to preach the Gospel. Bede tells how Theodore asked him to ride a horse for long journeys and, when

Chad hesitated, the archbishop himself helped him into the saddle. Near his church, Chad set up a more secluded dwelling where he prayed and studied with a few brothers.

His time as bishop was short. According to Bede, he died of the plague after being warned of his approaching death. The account relates that a monk heard mysterious singing descending from heaven toward his dwelling, and Bede presents it as the announcement of his passing to God. He also mentions healings obtained at his tomb. These stories express the veneration that surrounded Chad from the moment of his death. He was buried at Lichfield, and his tomb soon drew pilgrims.

The cult of Saint Chad

His relics were kept in Lichfield Cathedral until the Reformation and the dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century. Part of them was saved and, since the nineteenth century, they have been venerated in Saint Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham, the Catholic cathedral dedicated to him. Many churches in the English Midlands bear his name, and he remains one of the best-loved Anglo-Saxon saints in England.

Why is Saint Chad the patron saint of Mercia and Lichfield?

Chad was the first bishop of the Mercians to have his seat at Lichfield, and his tomb there made the city a center of pilgrimage for centuries. For this reason he is honored as the patron of the old kingdom of Mercia, roughly the English Midlands, and of the city and diocese of Lichfield. The Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham, which keeps his relics, also holds him in particular honor.

What can we learn from Saint Chad?

Chad is a saint of humility within the Church. Set aside from an office he had not sought, he did not defend himself but submitted to legitimate authority, and that obedience opened the way to a new mission. He reminds us that the Church is built less by ambition than by availability. He can be invoked for bishops, for those who must accept a difficult decision and for missionaries.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Chad in art

Chad is shown as a bishop, with miter and crozier, often holding a model of a church, the sign of his work as founder of the Church of Lichfield. He appears in this way in many stained glass windows in England and elsewhere.

Where to pray to Saint Chad

- **Birmingham** (England): Saint Chad's Catholic Cathedral, which keeps his relics.
- **Lichfield** (Staffordshire): the cathedral, seat of his diocese and site of his former tomb.
- **Lastingham** (Yorkshire): the monastery where he succeeded his brother Cedd.
- **Wishaw** (Warwickshire): the Church of Saint Chad.

To pray with him, Saintspedia offers a prayer to Saint Chad and a novena to Saint Chad ending on March 2.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Chad for Humility

Saint Chad is much loved in England, especially in the Midlands, 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 who stepped aside without bitterness, and the shepherd of Lichfield who walked his diocese on foot to preach the Gospel.

Prayer to Saint Chad

Saint Chad, humble shepherd of the Mercians, you never sought honor and accepted office only out of obedience. Teach me to serve without ambition and to look for God's will rather than my own success.

When your appointment was judged irregular, you stepped aside without complaint. Help me to accept with peace the decisions that disappoint me, and to trust that God can open a new road.

You walked the roads of Mercia to bring the Gospel to the people. Make me a humble witness of Christ wherever I go, close to those I meet.

Pray for our bishops and priests, for missionaries, and for the Church in England and in all the lands where your name is honored.

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

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

A story to pray with

Bede tells that Chad liked to travel his diocese on foot, like the Irish monks who had trained him. Archbishop Theodore asked him to use a horse for the long journeys and, when Chad hesitated, helped him into the saddle himself. The story shows two saints in friendship: one humble enough to walk, the other caring enough to insist. You can pray for the grace to accept help from others as simply as Chad did.

When to pray this prayer

The feast of Saint Chad is March 2. You can pray to him:

- for bishops, priests and missionaries;
- when you must accept a decision you did not want;
- when you feel unworthy of a responsibility;
- for the Diocese of Lichfield, the Archdiocese of Birmingham and the Church in England;
- for the sick, remembering the healings Bede reports at his tomb.

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

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Chad of Mercia

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Chad as told by Saint Bede the Venerable. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, March 2, begin it on February 22 (February 23 in a leap year). It often falls during Lent, and it can also be prayed at any time, especially when facing a difficult decision.

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 Chad's spirit of humility, obedience and missionary zeal. You can pray it 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 formation at Lindisfarne, his time in Ireland, the death of his brother Cedd, his first appointment as bishop, his humble withdrawal, his mission in Mercia and his peaceful death at Lichfield.

Day 1: A school of holiness

Chad was formed at Lindisfarne, the monastery founded by Saint Aidan. He learned there to pray, to study Scripture and to live simply. Every Christian needs a school of prayer where faith can take root.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the places and people who formed my faith. Keep me faithful to what I received.

Today: Spend ten minutes reading the Gospel in silence, as the monks of Lindisfarne did.

Day 2: Learning far from home

Chad spent time in Ireland, land of many monasteries, to deepen his spiritual life. Sometimes God asks us to leave familiar places in order to grow.

Prayer: Lord, give me a heart open to learning, wherever you lead me.

Today: Learn something new about your faith: read a page of a saint's life or of the Catechism.

Day 3: A family of saints

Chad belonged to a family of brothers given to God, among them Saint Cedd. When Cedd died of the plague in 664, Chad took up his work at Lastingham. Faith is passed on and continued within families.

Prayer: Lord, bless my brothers and sisters, and all my family. Help us support one another in faith.

Today: Pray for a deceased member of your family.

Day 4: Accepting a burden

Chad accepted the office of bishop only out of obedience, feeling unworthy of it. True humility does not refuse service, but receives it as a gift from God.

Prayer: Lord, when you give me a responsibility, help me receive it humbly and carry it faithfully.

Today: Accept a task you would rather avoid, and offer it to God.

Day 5: Stepping aside in peace

When Archbishop Theodore declared his appointment irregular, Chad withdrew without bitterness. He did not defend his position but entrusted himself to God. This is one of the most beautiful lessons of his life.

Prayer: Lord, help me accept with peace the decisions that disappoint me, and free me from bitterness.

Today: Let go of a grievance you have been holding on to.

Day 6: A new road opens

Moved by Chad's humility, Theodore completed his ordination and sent him to the Mercians. The door that closed opened onto a new mission. God does not waste our sacrifices.

Prayer: Lord, when one door closes, help me see the new road you are opening for me.

Today: Thank God for a time when a disappointment led to something good.

Day 7: Walking with the people

Chad liked to travel his diocese on foot to preach, close to the people. Theodore had to insist that he ride a horse for long journeys. A shepherd walks with his flock.

Prayer: Lord, make me close to those around me, attentive to their needs and ready to share my faith.

Today: Visit or call someone who is lonely.

Day 8: A place of prayer

Near his church at Lichfield, Chad set up a quiet dwelling where he prayed and studied with a few brothers. Mission must always be rooted in prayer.

Prayer: Lord, give me a place of silence each day where I can be with you.

Today: Set aside a quiet corner or a fixed time for prayer.

Day 9: Ready to meet God

Warned of his approaching death, Chad prepared himself in peace. Bede tells of heavenly singing heard around his dwelling. He died at Lichfield, probably on March 2, 672, and healings were reported at his tomb.

Prayer: Lord, prepare me for the day when you will call me, and let me live each day in your peace.

Today: Pray for the sick and the dying, and for those who care for them in hospitals, hospices and homes.

Closing prayer

Saint Chad, humble bishop of the Mercians, faithful disciple of Saint Aidan and friend of Saint Theodore, you accepted being set aside without bitterness and served the Gospel with gentleness. Pray for us, that we may be humble, obedient and zealous in our faith. Present to God the intention I have carried during these nine days, and help me accept his will with trust. Bless the Church in England and all who honor your memory, at Lichfield, at Birmingham and wherever your name is invoked. May they, like you, walk humbly with God and bring his Gospel to all. Amen.

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