

Hilda 18 November

Abbess of Whitby, 680 — Commemoration

Hilda was a seventh-century Englishwoman who became the abbess of Whitby and nurtured adjoining households of nuns and monks. The Venerable Bede wrote of her: "All who knew abbess Hilda, the servant of Christ, called her Mother because of her wonderful devotion and grace. . . ; she never ceased to give thanks to her Maker or to instruct the flock committed to her care."

She was born into the royal family of Northumbria and lived a quiet, devout life in the world until the age of thirty-three, when she decided to take the habit of a nun. Almost at once she was given charge of a small community at Wearmouth, and her guidance proved so effective that she was asked to renew the life of another community nearby. In the year 657 she finally moved to Whitby, a monastery which included a household of monks and a household of nuns. Under her leadership it became the most famous religious community in all England.

The Venerable Bede reported: "Not only was Hilda an outstanding example of holy life to all who were in her monastery, but she also provided an opportunity for salvation and repentance to many who lived far away and who heard the happy story of her industry and virtue." Bede went on to say: "So great was Hilda's prudence that not only ordinary people but also kings and princes sometimes sought and received her advice when they were in difficulties. She compelled those under her direction to devote so much time to the study of the holy Scriptures and so much time to the doing of good works, that there was no trouble in finding many who were fitted. . . for the service of the altar."

So, we give thanks for Hilda of Whitby, who died in the year 680 and used her own gifts of holiness and wisdom to nurture holy gifts in others, that they might serve the people of Christ and make seventh-century England a household of God.

Sentence

In the assembly of the Most High she opens her mouth, and in the presence of his hosts she tells of her glory. *Sirach* 24.2

Collect

Lord our God,
you girded your servant Hilda
with the gifts of justice and holy strength,
and made her a wise and prudent mother
in the household of your Spirit.
May we never cease to give thanks to you, our Maker,
or be slow to instruct one another
in the knowledge and love of your mercy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Readings

Ephesians 4.1-6 Psalm 122

Refrain Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
Matthew 19.27-29

Prayer over the Gifts

Eternal God,
who beckoned to your servant Hilda
and made her a judge among your people,
cast from this household all works of strife
and keep every harm from this table,
that our worship may accord with your will
and our gifts may befit your purpose;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Preface of a Saint

Prayer after Communion

Maker and Lover of all creation,
who trained your servant Hilda
in the works of wisdom and reconciliation,
draw us, we pray, towards the goal of our faith,
where we shall know the truth of our dignity
in the fullness of your peace.
We ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ the Lord.