

Month of February

THE 25TH DAY

Commemoration of **the Right-believing Ethelbert, King of Kent**

N.B.: *Though the commemoration of St. Ethelbert falleth on the 24th of February, we move it to the 25th, lest it fall on the feast of the 1st & 2nd Findings of the Precious Head of St. John the Forerunner. The service to the holy hierarch Tarasius, Petriarch of Constantinople, is moved either to Compline or to some other date determined by the rector or the ecclesiarch.*

At Vespers

On "Lord, I have cried...", 3 stichera of the saint, in Tone II: Spec. Mel.: "When from the Tree..."—

When the might of Rome had departed from the British shores, and barbarian tribes fell upon them, Gregory, the boast of Orthodox hierarchs, sent new apostles to enlighten them; and the servants of God, coming to land on Thanet's coast, met the glorious King Ethelbert, whom they brought to faith in the one true God.

Having learned of the Christian Church from the holy Bertha his queen, and in her piety and kindness perceived the essence of the Orthodox Faith, Ethelbert received the new apostles with reverence and opened his heart to their preaching; wherefore, his sins were washed clean away in the hallowed waters of regeneration.

Remember now, ye Christians of the English land, the holy Ethelbert, your father in the faith, for by his corrections ye came to know eternal life, to understand the Truth, and to submit to the great Father of spirits; wherefore, in acclamations exalt him most fervently, for he reigneth ever with Christ and intercedeth for us all.

Troparion of the saint, in Tone IV—

Having acquired all the Christian virtues, O right-believing King Ethelbert, thou didst attain glory in doing godly deeds, and art now enrolled among the choirs of the saints on high; for, having passed from the things of this fleeting world, in glory thou reignest now eternally with Christ our God, Whom do thou beseech to grant us great mercy.

At Matins

Canon of the saint, with 4 troparia, the acrostic whereof is "Ethelbert now reigneth with God on high", in Tone VII—

Ode I

Irmos: To the Lord, Who made the waters of the Red Sea a bulwark for His people, and covered Pharaoh and his whole army with the deep, let us sing, for gloriously hath He been glorified!

Extol ye Ethelbert the king with goodly praise, for in this life was he a bulwark for his people, leading them forth from unbelief unto our great God, Who hath gloriously been glorified.

The shores of thy land were girt about by the abyss of heathen superstition, O king, but like Moses thou didst lead thy people across, crying out to God, for gloriously hath He been glorified.

Having passed through the baptismal waters and accepted the law of God, O saint, thou didst bring thy people to the promised land on high, unto God Who hath gloriously been glorified.

Theotokion: Every tongue doth bless the Mother of God, for she gave birth without seed unto Him Who from bondage delivered His people, who hymned Him, for gloriously hath He been glorified.

Ode III

Irmos: Establish me in the confession of the Orthodox Faith, O Lord, lest the enemy shake me utterly.

Let us now praise Ethelbert, who took up the Orthodox Faith and felled the false images of wood.

Beguiled by Satan, the Saxons worshiped in groves; but Ethelbert hewed down their sacred trees.

Establishing the true Faith throughout his realm, the holy king rebuilt the ancient temples of God.

Theotokion: Remember thy sinful children, O Theotokos, and preserve us, lest the enemy shake us utterly.

Sessional hymn, in Tone III: Spec. Mel.: "Of the divine faith..."—

When thou didst embrace the divine Faith, O Ethelbert, the nobles and people of Kent, imitating thy piety, had recourse in great multitudes to the baptismal waters; and thou didst bring them to Christ God in triumph, wherefore thou prayest ever that He grant great mercy to our souls.

Glory..., Now & ever...: Theotokion, or stavrotheotokion (see in the Menaion, under February 25th).

Ode IV

Irmos: I heard report of Thee, O Lord, and I was afraid; I understood Thy works, and was filled with awe: for Thou hast destroyed death by Thy Cross, granting us life.

Thou didst see the pious life of thy queen, O righteous one, and, filled with awe, thou didst come to believe on Christ our Life, Who destroyed death by His Cross.

Never wavering from the straight and narrow path that leadeth to salvation, O king, from thy land thou didst uproot the remnants of heathen belief like tares.

O thy mighty virtues and godly works, O saint! For throughout Kent thou didst build churches of God and monasteries wherein thy people could worship Him.

Theotokion: We all are filled with awe as we ponder the dread mystery of our salvation, O Lady, the beginning whereof lay in thine assent to bear the Messiah in thy womb.

Ode V

Irmos: O Light unapproachable, enlighten me, who am benighted by the darkness of the passions, that, rising early, I may cry out to Thee: Thy precepts are light and peace!

Resplendent with spiritual radiance, O holy king, shine it now upon us who lie in darkness of soul, that with thee we may cry to God: Thy precepts are light and peace!

Ethelbert shone with noble brightness, leaving far behind the heathen darkness that had overshadowed his soul, crying out to his Lord: Thy precepts are light and peace!

In the gloom of delusion did the peoples of England lie, prey to all the passions of the men's souls; but Ethelbert taught them the precepts of God, which are light and peace.

Theotokion: Gloom enshroudeth our souls, and the passions, like thick darkness, cover us, O Mistress; yet in our distress we cry out to thy Son: Thy precepts are light and peace!

Ode VI

Irmos: Deliver me from the multitude of my transgressions, as Thou didst Jonah from the sea monster, O Thou Who alone lovest mankind.

Nigh unto the brink of spiritual ruin hath England come in these sad days, O holy one, but by thine entreaties deliver it from peril, we pray.

Ever burdened by our transgressions, we stumble on the path of life; but set us aright, O saint, that we may tread the narrow path.

The Lord Who loveth mankind delivered thee from the deception of idolatry, O king, as of old He freed Jonah from the sea monster.

Theotokion: Harrowed by the multitude of our transgressions, O all-holy one, from the depths of our iniquity we cry to thee: Save us, lest we perish!

Kontakion, in Tone I—

O husbandman of Christ, who with the Cross as a scythe didst mow down the tares of heathen superstition, and didst plant piety in thy land: as thou hast boldness before the Lord, by thine intercessions restore the Orthodox Faith among the English, that, mindful of thy favor with God Most High, they may ever cry to thee: Rejoice, O right-believing Ethelbert, great king and equal of the apostles!

Ode VII

Irmos: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers, Creator of all, Who reimest in the cherubim, and didst save the children in the furnace!

When thou didst come to Christ, O Ethelbert, forsaking the worship of demons, thou didst cry: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!

In Canterbury thou didst build a great church, O saint, and a monastery where monks could pray: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!

The king of Essex gladly gave thee leave to build a temple in London, O holy one, wherein Christians could cry: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!

Theotokion: He Who came forth from thy womb, clad in our flesh, received the pure and blessed soul of thee whom the many-eyed cherubim hymn.

Ode VIII

Irmos: Of old, the pious children trampled underfoot the furnace that burned with fire; for they were undaunted by fear of the tyrant, and, consumed more with love than piety, they said: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Guided by the Spirit, full of piety and Christian love the wondrous Ethelbert ruled his land with justice and righteousness, bidding his people to praise God continually, saying: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Of old, the kingdom of Kent and all the English realms burned brightly with the fire of grace, and gave rise to many who were holy and righteous, who cried out without ceasing: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Delighting greatly in thy God, with rejoicing thou didst offer up the fruits of piety on the spiritual altar of thy heart, O blessed one, and thy soul exulted in jubilation, crying: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

O the boons granted your dominion by God, O right-believing Ethelbert and

Bertha! For had ye not planted the worship of the Holy Trinity therein, thy people would not chant: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Theotokion: Now let us bless the all-immaculate Mother of the Light, who, full of love for our sinful race, doth intercede unceasingly before Him in our behalf, and teacheth us to sing with piety: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Ode IX

Irmos: With hymns let us magnify the true Theotokos, the holy tabernacle, the animate ark, which the Wisdom of God hath made.

Hymning the valiant Ethelbert, who escorted his people into the noetic tabernacle of the courts of our God, we magnify him with faith.

If Ethelbert had not taken the teachings of Christ into his heart, the pagan English would have languished long in grievous unbelief.

Gathering together, ye people of England, cast off your errors and enter again the ark of salvation, whither Ethelbert led you of old.

Theotokion: Hymning the Ever-virgin, O all ye faithful, we perceive her prefigured in the unquarried mount, whence the Word came forth.