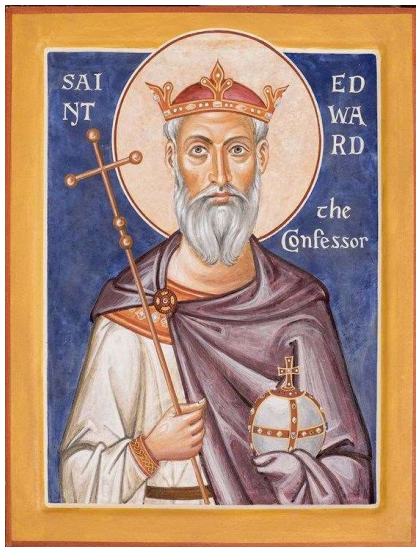


## Saint Edward the Confessor, the parish patron

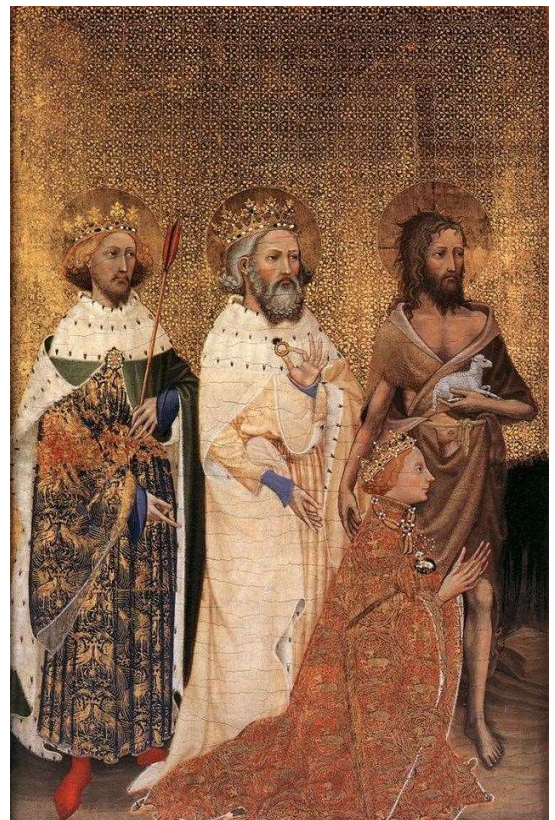


St. Edward was born in 1003 the son of King Ethelred II and Emma, daughter of Duke Richard of Normandy. When hardly ten years old he was sent with his brother Alfred into Normandy to be brought up at the court of the duke his uncle, as the Danes had conquered and devastated England. In the midst of the sensuality of the world and the temptations to all possible frivolities, Edward, while still young, endeavoured to lead so retired and innocent a life, that he was admired by all, and was called the Angel of the court. He took no pleasure in those amusements in which young princes generally delight, but found his greatest joy in prayer and study. His devotion at Church during holy Mass was truly wonderful; and no time spent there seemed to him too long. He had the greatest horror for everything that was in the least contrary to chastity. No immodest word ever passed his lips, and none was ever uttered in his presence without being severely censured by him. The long absence from his home and kingdom he bore with the most admirable patience, and when, one day, some courtiers said to him that he must regain his kingdom by force of arms, he said, that he did not desire a crown which must be won by shedding blood. Edward was called by acclamation to the throne at the age of about forty, being welcomed even by the Danish settlers owing to his gentle saintly character. His reign was one of almost

unbroken peace.

The new King bestowed his first care on the restoration of the prosperity of the kingdom, and to this end, he endeavoured to revive the worship of the true God and to reform the corrupted morals of his subjects. The revenues taken from the church were restored to it; churches were repaired or rebuilt, together with many monasteries for religious men and women, whose duty it would be to restore the old religion and the fear of God throughout the land; for he used to say: *"The most efficacious means to secure the happiness of a country is religion and the fear of God: for the well-being of a state depends mostly on the prosperity of its Church."* The nobility demanded that Edward should marry, that the kingdom might not be left without an heir to the throne. Edward, who had already made a vow of perpetual continence, but was unwilling to reveal it, consented to their wish, and married Edith, the daughter of Count Godwin, but lived in continency until his end. As he could not leave his kingdom without injury to his people, the making of a pilgrimage to St. Peter's tomb in Rome, to which he had bound himself, was commuted by the Pope into the rebuilding at Westminster of St. Peter's Abbey, the dedication of which took place but a week before his death, and in which he was buried.

To his subjects he was a most perfect model of all Christian virtues, and cared for their well-being like a tender father. He manifested special love to the poor and the orphans, whence he received the glorious title of Guardian of the orphans and Father of the poor. He was a wise and just administrator, gave everyone free access to him, and allowed no one to depart without relief. His leisure hours were spent in prayer and works of charity. He was never better satisfied than when he had almost emptied the royal treasury into the hands of the poor. Once, during holy Mass, at which he daily assisted with great devotion, he had the happiness of seeing our Lord in a most beautiful form surrounded by heavenly brightness. On Pentecost-day, God revealed to him, during holy Mass, that the king of Denmark, who intended to invade England, and who was already on sea, had perished. One day, while on his way to Church, he met a poor paralytic man, who was creeping slowly to the sacred edifice. The holy king took him upon his shoulders, and carried him thus into the house of God. This admirable work of charity God rewarded by immediately bestowing health upon the poor paralytic. St. Edward was the first King of England to touch for the "king's evil", many sufferers from the disease were cured by him. He was canonized by Pope Alexander III in 1161. His feast is kept on the 13<sup>th</sup> October, his incorrupt body having been solemnly translated on that day in 1163 by St. Thomas Becket in the presence of King Henry II.



THE LATE MEDIEVAL ALTAR FRONTAL "THE WILTON DIPTYCH" DEPICTS ST. EDWARD IN WHITE WITH ST. EDMUND & ST. JOHN BAPTIST ON HIS LEFT & RIGHT PRESENTING RICHARD II TO THE VIRGIN MARY & THE CHRIST CHILD