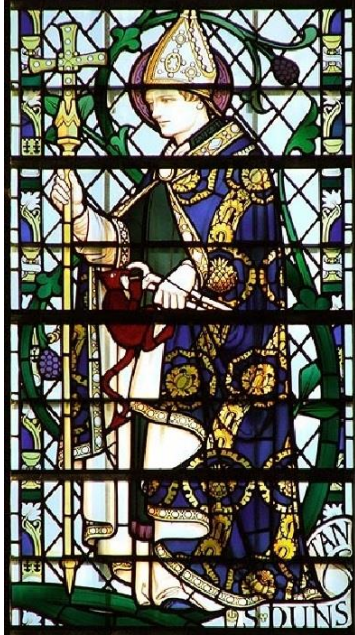


Saint Dunstan: Saint, Scholar and Statesman



If the truth be known, the diocesan patron saint, St. Dunstan was a remarkable and very influential individual for his time. This English statesman lived during the 10th century (910-988) and fostered religious renewal and a more peaceful and orderly government during his day.

During the 940s as Abbot of Glastonbury he revitalized monastic life and rebuilt the abbey. Over time Glastonbury became an important centre of both monasticism and of learning.

In 957 Dunstan became Bishop of Worcester and in the following year, when the See of London became vacant, that was conferred on Dunstan who held it in conjunction with his role as Bishop of Worcester.

For almost 20 years (960-978) Dunstan was the Archbishop of Canterbury, the most senior clerical position in England. At the same time he provided “good counsel” to the rulers of the day. And it has been suggested that during this period “good order was maintained throughout the realm and there was a level of peace in the kingdom unknown in living memory.”

It is noteworthy that in 973 Dunstan (when his statesmanship was at its highest) officiated at the coronation of King Edgar, where he devised the official ceremony, celebrating the event with a poem taken from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. This ceremonial service that he created forms the basis of the present-day British coronation ceremony. By way of sharing a little regal history, King Edgar ruled as a strong and popular king until his death in 989.

During the period 978-988, Dunstan retired to Canterbury where he:

- Spent long hours in personal prayer,
- Attended Mass regularly,
- Practised his crafts making bells and organs,
- Encouraged and protected European scholars who came to England, and
- Was active as a teacher in the cathedral school.

Dunstan died on May 19 in the year 988 on the vigil of Ascension Day and his final words are recorded as being:

“He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord. He hath given food to them that fear him.”

The English people accepted him as a saint soon after his death. He was formally canonized in 1029.

Clearly he is a remarkable and significant choice as the patron saint of the Diocese of Charlottetown. Given his accomplishments both within the Church and as a wise counsellor to the regal rulers of the day, it is most appropriate that we celebrate the man and invoke his good guidance.

Footnote: It was Bishop Plessis of Quebec who chose the patron, St. Dunstan, for the church to be built in Charlottetown in 1816.