



St. Adrian of Canterbury

Born: c.635 in Libya Cyrenaica, North Africa as Hadrian

Died: 9 January 710 of natural causes at Canterbury, England, and buried there, his tomb became a site of miracles, body found incorrupt in 1091

An African by birth, then a monk and an abbot in Italy, and finally chosen to accompany the Greek monk Theodore of Tarsus to become archbishop of Canterbury, Adrian supervised a flourishing school in that cathedral town. Patrick Duffy tells his story.

Adrian was born in Africa and became a monk and eventually abbot of Nerida, not far from Naples. In the early years of the See of Canterbury after St Augustine, the archbishops were chosen from the companions who had come with him from Rome. Two Englishmen then succeeded, but as both fell victim to the plague in 664 and 665, the pope of the time, Vitalian (657-672) wanted to appoint Adrian. He refused but suggested the nomination of a Greek monk Theodore of Tarsus. Vitalian accepted this suggestion, provided Adrian accompany Theodore as his adviser and helper. Which he did.

A golden age for the Church in England On arrival in Canterbury Theodore appointed Adrian abbot of the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul (later St Augustine's). An excellent administrator as well as a Greek and Latin scholar, Adrian insured that the monastery grew into a centre of theological learning drawing students from all over England and even Ireland. Adrian helped his archbishop in the pastoral governance of the English Church. Bede says of this time: "Never had there been such happy times as these since the English settled in Britain."

Adrian worked at Canterbury for nearly forty years, far outliving Theodore. He was buried in the church of the monastery. His body was still incorrupt when renovations made the translation of Canterbury saints necessary. Many of the miracles for which his tomb became famous were in favour of boys who studied in the monastery and were in trouble with their masters.

