

## A STUDY OF “THE SAINTS THROUGH THE CENTURIES”

By Richard Thornton

### SAINT ALFRED THE GREAT (849-899) – NINTH CENTURY

When Alfred was only four years old, he went to Rome with his father, King Ethelwulf of Wessex (part of England). While he was there, Pope Leo IV made Alfred his godson and anointed him to become King. This was surprising because Alfred had three older brothers. Alfred probably planned to become a priest or even a bishop, but instead he had to become king after his father and three brothers died.

Alfred was a very smart and humble king. He came up with good plans to keep the Vikings from taking over his land. He encouraged everyone to learn philosophy and theology. Alfred always led by example and he believed that he was responsible for the welfare of the people who lived in his Kingdom – both in this life and in the next.

A devout Christian, Saint Alfred had a reputation as a learned and merciful man with a gracious nature who encouraged education, and improved his kingdoms legal systems, military structure and his people’s quality of life.

Saint Alfred was a great scholar, translating classics for his people:

“The Consolation of Philosophy” of Boethius.

“The History of the World” of Orosius.

“Eccleastical History” of Saint Bede.

“Pastoral Care” of Saint Gregory the Great.

“Dialogue of Saint Gregory the Great.

His work as a patron of the Arts, Literature, and especially the Church made him a beloved figure throughout England.

The only King of England to be titled "The Great" Saint Alfred compiled a book of proverbs and he had developed a great many other quotable phrases found elsewhere. Some of these include the following:

Therefore he seems to me a very foolish man and truly wretched, who wilt not increase his understanding while he is in the world, and ever wish and long to reach that endless life where all shall be made clear.

Power is never good, unless the one who has it is good.

The saddest thing for a man is that he be ignorant; the most exciting is that he knows.

Saint Alfred was sent into a world of chaos and violence. He restored order, fostered learning, and defended the faith during a time of darkness. Let us ask for his intercession now, in the time of our own world's darkness.

Prayer of Saint Alfred The Great "We pray to you, O Lord, who are the Supreme Truth, and all truth is from you. We beseech you O Lord, who are the highest wisdom, and all the wise depend on you for their wisdom. You are the supreme joy, and all who are happy owe it to you. You are the light of minds, and all receive their understanding from you. We love you, we love you above all. We seek you, we follow you, and we are ready to serve you. We desire to dwell under your power for you are the King of all"