



### Why should Edward the Confessor be made a saint?

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After his death, many stories were written about the holy life of St Edward the Confessor. A manuscript written by a monk shortly after St Edward the Confessor's death describes him as "a saint in this world" who is now "living as a saint in heaven". The writer claims that miracles are taking place at St Edward the Confessor's grave. He says "By his intervention, the blind are made to see and the lame to walk again, the sick are cured and the sad consoled."

Below are some of the many claims and stories written about Edward the Confessor after he died.

#### Activity:

Read them through and discuss the following questions:

- 1) Which of these events take place in his lifetime and which take place after he has died?
- 2) Do you think these stories are real?
- 3) Which story do you think is the strongest argument for Edward the Confessor being made a saint?
- 4) Why do you think the monks at Westminster Abbey were so keen to have Edward the Confessor declared a saint?

#### The Stories and Miracles of Edward the Confessor

On one occasion when Edward the Confessor was attending mass and receiving the bread and wine, Edward saw an image of Jesus Christ appear on the bread.

It was believed that Edward the Confessor had the power to heal people by touching them. On his way to Church, Edward met a man who couldn't walk. The king took him upon his shoulders and carried him into the Church. Upon entering the church, the man was able to walk again.

Edward the Confessor claimed that he had seen a vision of the King of Denmark drowning on a voyage to invade and conquer England. When messengers were sent to Denmark to investigate, they found that the story was true and the king had indeed died.

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# Westminster Abbey

## Learning



36 years after his death, Edward the Confessor's coffin was opened and his body examined. It was found to be in perfect condition without any decay, and gave off a sweet fragrance.

He was generous to the poor. He once caught his servant stealing from him three times and three times let him get away with it, saying "He needs the gold more than I do".

It was said that a blind man regained his sight after his eyes were touched with water in which Edward the Confessor's hands had been washed.

Prior Osbert of Westminster Abbey claimed that he had been cured from a fever by praying at the tomb of the King.

At the start of his reign, Edward the Confessor was taken to the treasury to look at all of his money. The money had been collected, without his knowledge, by placing very heavy land taxes on the people in England. When Edward the Confessor got inside the treasury, he saw the Devil sitting on the money. When he asked the Devil what he was doing there, the devil replied that he was guarding the money that belonged to him because it had been taken unjustly from the poor. Edward the Confessor ordered that the money be returned immediately to those who had paid it.

Edward the Confessor was once riding to a church dedicated to St John the Evangelist when a beggar asked for alms. He had no money so he took off his ring and handed it to the poor man. Sometime later, two pilgrims from England were travelling in the Holy Land and became lost. They were helped by an old man who revealed he was St John the Evangelist. He gave them Edward the Confessor's ring and asked them to return it to their king. St John told the pilgrims to give Edward the Confessor the message that in six months' time, he would die, but that he would meet St John in heaven.

Edward the Confessor claimed that he had seen a vision of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. In Christian tradition, the sleepers are said to have hidden inside a cave for hundreds of years to escape persecution. In his vision, he is said to have seen the sleepers roll onto their left side, suggesting many years of bad luck. He predicted that the next 74 years would be full of war, disease and natural disasters. When ambassadors were sent to Ephesus to investigate, it was reported that the Seven Sleepers had indeed turned onto their left side.

### **Extension Activity /Homework**

Imagine that the year is 1136 and you are Prior Osbert, the most important monk at Westminster Abbey. You believe very strongly that Edward the Confessor should be made a saint. You have heard many stories about how devoted he was to God and believe that miracles are taking place at his burial place. You need to write an argument to the Pope (Head of the Catholic Church) and persuade him that Edward the Confessor should be canonised.

You could write about:

- His good qualities whilst he was King of England

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# Westminster Abbey

## Learning



- Miracles that took place whilst Edward the Confessor was alive
- Miracles that have taken place at Edward the Confessor's grave in Westminster Abbey
- Why you think it is important that Edward the Confessor is made a saint