

April 24th Diocesan Memorial of Saints Mellitus and Erkenwald, bishops

Saint Mellitus was of Roman birth. He was one of the group sent in 601 by Pope Gregory to assist Augustine in the evangelising of Southern England. Bede records a letter sent to Mellitus by Gregory saying that the missionaries should not destroy the pagan temples, only their idols; that the temples should be cleansed and then re-dedicated as churches. Mellitus was made the first bishop of London in 604, and in 619 he succeeded Laurence becoming the third Archbishop of Canterbury.

Saint Erkenwald was born in the early 7th Century to the royal family of East Anglia. He was converted to Christianity by St Mellitus. In his turn he brought his own sister, Ethelburga, to faith and baptised her. In 666 Erkenwald founded a monastery at Chertsey and then, shortly after, a convent at Barking, intending this as a place of refuge for his sister, now fled from home to avoid enforced marriage to a pagan.

In 675 Erkenwald was made bishop of London, second in succession to St Mellitus. Erkenwald was a noted evangelist and was responsible for the conversion of 2 Kings of Essex.

Erkenwald is credited with being the founder of St Paul's Cathedral, built over a pagan temple. He died at Barking in 693 and was buried at St Paul's.

Entrance Antiphon

These are holy men who became God's friends and glorious heralds of his truth.

Opening Prayer

Lord God,
you counted Saints Mellitus and Erkenwald among your holy pastors,
renowned for faith and love
which overcame darkness in this world.
By the help of their prayers
keep us strong in faith and love
and let us come to share in their glory.

*We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ your
Son,
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.*

Prayer over the gifts

Lord,
may the sacrifice which wipes away
the sins of all the world
bring us your forgiveness.
Help us as we offer it on this yearly feast
in honour of Saints Mellitus and Erkenwald.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Communion Antiphon

I will feed my sheep, says the Lord, and give them repose.

Prayer after Communion

Lord God,
let the power of the gifts we receive
on this feast of Saints Mellitus and Erkenwald
take full effect in us.
May this eucharist bring us your help in this life
and lead us to happiness
in the unending life to come.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.