

Augustine

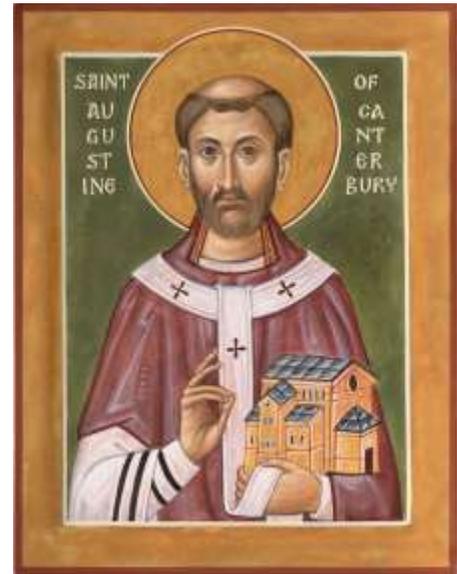
Saint Name: St. Augustine of Canterbury

Dates: Born first third of the 6th century – May 27, 604

Location: Canterbury, United Kingdom

Feast Day: May 27

Augustine was born sometime in the early part of the 6th century in Rome, Italy. There are very few records of his years before his dedication as a Benedictine of St. Andrew in Rome, where he was the Prior. Pope St. Gregory the Great had lived under Augustine's rule in that same monastery and when the Pope decided to send missionaries to Anglo-Saxon England, he chose Augustine and thirty other monks. Other missionaries had made that same dangerous trip into England and were forced into hiding. However, Pope St. Gregory the Great believed the time was right to send Augustine and the others to Kent because he felt that the Christian wife of King Ethelbert of Kent could have some influence over the king. All along the journey, Augustine and the other monks heard stories of Anglo-Saxon cruelty and barbarity. The stories were so frightening that the group almost turned back to Rome. Augustine and the monks landed on the Isle of Thanet and proceeded to King Ethelbert's home town of Canterbury, where they were greeted by King Ethelbert. King Ethelbert was a pagan, but out of respect for his wife he went to hear what Augustine had to say. The king, being just as afraid of them as they were of him, held the meeting out in the open and listened to what they had to say about Christianity. He didn't convert immediately - but was impressed enough to let them continue to preach so long as they did not force anyone to convert. Augustine was consecrated as a bishop and soon converted many of the king's subjects and the king himself, who was baptized in a Mass on Christmas Day in 597. Augustine had to proceed cautiously because, although the English people had embraced Christianity, they still respected the old ways. Under the guidance of Pope St. Gregory the Great, Augustine aided the transition from paganism to Christianity by consecrating pagan temples for worship and turning pagan festivals into feast days of martyrs. Canterbury was built on the site of an ancient pagan church. Soon after his arrival, Augustine founded the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul, which later became St. Augustine's Abbey. Augustine became the first Archbishop of Canterbury in the year 597.



Augustine was only in England for eight years before his death on May 27, 604 but is considered the "Apostle of the English" and a founder of the English Church. His feast day is celebrated on May 27. St. Augustine was not canonized – he was proclaimed a saint by early Christians. Canonization did not begin until the 12th century.