

Did you know . . .

**Blessed Among Us:
St. Walburga**

St. Walburga was born in Devonshire, England around 710. She was the daughter of St. Richard the pilgrim, one of the under-kings of the West Saxons and Winna, sister of St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany who traveled to convert the Saxons on the continent. Thus, St. Walburga was niece to St. Boniface. She had two brothers, St. Winibald and St. Willibald, making hers one of the saintliest families in English history.

When St. Richard went on pilgrimage with his two sons to the Holy Land, St. Walburga, 11 years old at the time, was entrusted to the abbess of Wimborne and educated by the nuns of Wimborne Abbey. She remained there for 26 years, then joined her brothers and mother in Germany to help evangelize the pagans there.

In 748, she was sent with St. Lioba to Germany to help St. Boniface in his missionary work. She spent two years at Bishofsheim, after which she became Abbess of the double monastery at Heidenheim founded by her brother Winibald. At the death of Winibald in 761, St. Walburga was appointed Abbess of both monasteries by her brother Willibald, who was then Bishop of Eichstadt.

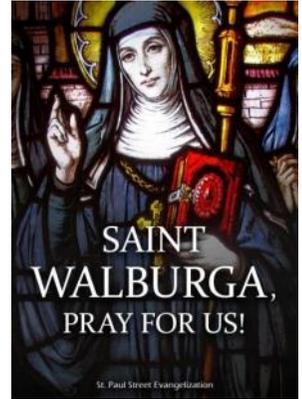
By this time, she became skilled in the medical arts and acquired a reputation as a gifted healer. This reputation continued after her death in 779, when an aromatic fluid, of supposed healing properties, flowed from a fissure in the rock on which her tomb rested.

St. Walburga was buried first at Heidenheim, but later her body was interred next to that of her brother, St. Winibald, at Eichstadt at a small church called Holy Cross around which a group of canonesses were gathered.

The night of May 1, when St. Walburga's relics were moved to Eichstadt in 870, is known as Walpurgisnacht. It is a pagan festival marking the beginning of summer and the revels of witches. Although the saint had no connection with this festival, her name became associated with witchcraft and country superstitions because of the date.

She was canonized on 1 May ca. 870 by Pope Adrian II.

St Walburga's Abbey is situated in Eichsmett, Bavaria, Germany and there is another Benedictine Abbey of St Walburga in Virginia Dale, Colorado. St. Walburga also gave her name to the historic St. Walburge's church in Preston, which at 309 ft. remains the tallest parish church in England, and shorter than only two cathedrals. And she was the inspiration for Walburga Black, one of the witches in the Harry Potter series of children's books



Judy Pearson