

The Canonization of Edward the Confessor

Edward the Confessor was the last Anglo-Saxon king from the house of Wessex. He ruled in England from 1042 to 1066. He spent his youth in exile in Normandy. During his reign England enjoyed peace and prosperity. There was a struggle in the court between so-called French side (Edward's friends from the continent) and Anglo-Danish side (great Earls). The biggest question was succession after Edward, because his marriage with Edith, daughter of Godwin, Earl of Wessex, was childless. William the Conqueror claimed and won the throne after the battle of Hastings in 1066.

Immediately after his death, Edward was venerated among monks of Westminster Abbey. They tried to canonize him. The first attempt in 1138, which was the work of prior Osbert de Clare, was unsuccessful, mostly because of the uncertain situation in England. The second attempt in 1161 succeeded. It was more supported by the clergy and king as well. Thanks to the difficult international situation the Pope was helpful to request. In 1163 Edward was ceremonially translated to a new shrine in Westminster Abbey.

Canonization is a legal action, after which a person is added to a list of saints and people give him a proper veneration. The history of this process goes back to early Christian times; since the 12th century it is the Pope who canonizes new saints.

Saint is a person who was canonized. A saint is venerated, has his own feast day and a place of cult. Saints are recorded in the official list.

Anglo-Saxon England is a name for a period in English history from the beginning of the 5th century to 1066. It is marked by huge cultural development and flowering of Christianity. From the end of the 8th century onwards England was threatened by Vikings; they changed society.

Anglo-Norman England stretched between 1066 and 1154. England was conquered by Norman count William. The Normans are supposed to bring real feudalism to England. The upper classes of society were mostly Normans and spoke French, the lower classes were still mainly Anglo-Saxon. The church was subject to the king.

Plantagenet England is named after the dynasty, which ruled from 1154 to 1399. The culture was in the 12th century mostly French, because English king possessed large dominions on the continent. During the time it became more English. The church struggled for emancipation.