

Saint Bertha

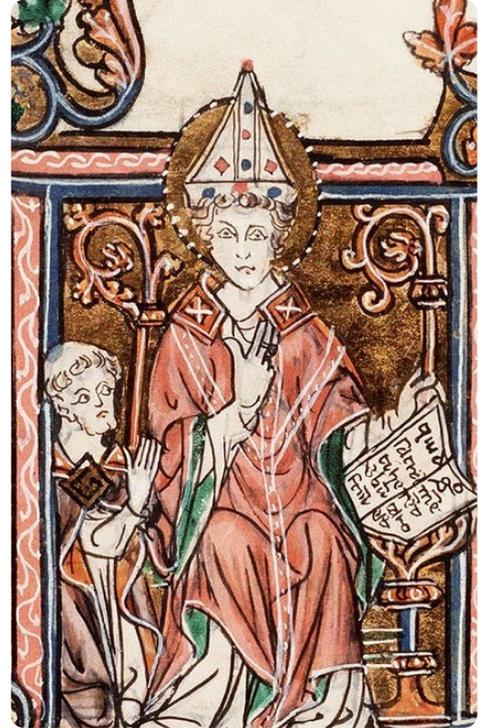
Queen Bertha (b. early 560s - d. after 604) was a French princess who married King Ethelbert of Kent, one of the most powerful Kings in Saxon England. She was a Christian and part of the marriage agreement was that she should be allowed to continue to practice as a Christian, even when she moved to Kent.

Most Saxons at this time were pagan. This means that they were not Christian but

worshipped many different gods. Some of our days of the week are still named after these gods, for example Tuesday is named after Tiw, the god of war, Wednesday is named after Woden, the chief Saxon god and Friday is named after his wife Freyja.

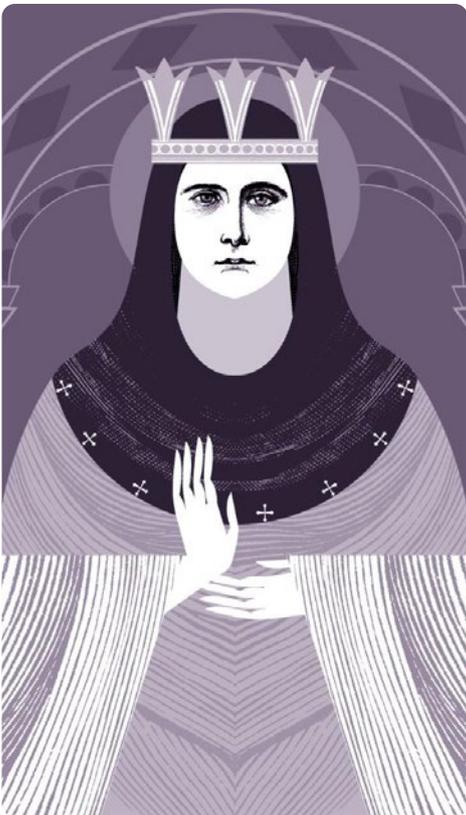
Pope Gregory wanted St Augustine (with Queen Bertha's help) to convert the English to Christianity, but this would not be easy. A letter sent from Pope Gregory to Bertha in 601 tells Bertha that she should be doing more to convert her husband to Christianity, but he also thanked her for the warm welcome St Augustine received.

When St Augustine first arrived, the King did not want to let him into the City of Canterbury because some people were worried the monks might be sorcerers. To be safe, the King arranged to meet the monks in the open air on the Isle of Thanet, near modern day Ramsgate, where St Augustine and his monks had just arrived after their long journey from Rome.



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King Ethelbert did give St Augustine land to build an Abbey outside Canterbury, which is now called St Augustine's Abbey. He also passed laws to protect the Christian Church. He was the first Saxon king to convert to Christianity (soon after the Pope's letter to Queen Bertha). A few years after her death, Queen Bertha was made a saint to recognise her persuasiveness and hard work in helping convert the English to Christianity.



Saint Bertha



- a. Imagine you are Queen Bertha. Deliver a persuasive argument to your husband, King Ethelbert, about why he should become a Christian.



- b. Imagine you are King Ethelbert and your wife is trying to convert you to Christianity. Deliver a persuasive argument to remain pagan.



You could deliver these arguments in the form of a debate and ask your audience to vote for who they felt won the debate.