

# ST WINEFRIDE

PATRON SAINT OF WALES  
PATRON OF UNWANTED ADVANCES  
FEAST DAY IS 3 NOVEMBER

There are no Catholic schools in the village of Lymm, where I live, but there is a Catholic church called St. Winefride's. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, classes in Catholicism were held for children who went to non-Catholic schools. I was privileged to be one of the Catechists for over 12 years. The children in my age group were 8 to 9-year-olds.

During a recent conversation with friends, I was reminded of a very embarrassing situation when a young boy asked me who St Winefride was—the saint our parish is named after. The only thing I did know about her was that she lived long ago in North Wales, and people still visit a shrine to her on the North Wales coast at Holywell.

I had to use the Internet to find out about St Winefride. What I did find made me realise how little I knew about saints, especially female ones. The following is what I learned about St. Winefride. I'll cover others in future articles.

## ST. WINEFRIDE

Our Welsh saint was initially known as GUENEVRA, but her name was changed to the English form of WINEFRIDE. We know that she was born around 600 and died in 660.

Her father was THEVIT, a Cambrian magnate, and her mother was WENLO, the sister of a man who became ST. BEUNO.

St Winefride's family lived in Holywell, and one-day Beuno came to visit them and stayed. He began to live there, built a chapel where he said Mass, and preached to the people. Winefride was one of his most attentive listeners.

When around 15 years old, she had developed into a clever young woman with great personal charm. Under the guidance of St. Beuno, Winefride became a great lover of Christianity and decided to offer her life to God by becoming a nun, all with her parents' consent.

Caradoc, the son of the neighbouring Prince Alan, heard about the Winefride's beauty and talents and visited the house of Thevit to ask for her hand in marriage. She was alone, as her parents were in Beuno's chapel at mass.

Caradoc knew she had decided to become a nun but pressed her to change her mind. She refused and ran down the hill to Beuno's chapel, where her parents were.

Caradoc chased after her and caught her as she ran down the slope to the chapel. She continued to deny wanting to be his wife, and in anger, Caradoc drew his sword and severed her head from her body.

Her head rolled down the slope, and a spring suddenly gushed out of the ground where it rested. Beuno heard the commotion, left the altar, and, with her parents, found Winefride's head.

He carried the head and took it to the body, covering both with his cloak, taking them to the chapel where he finished saying mass. Afterwards, he prayed to God and then ordered the cloak to be removed. Winefride's head was back on her body, with only a slight mark showing around the neck. She stirred as if waking from sleep.

Seeing Caradoc standing there leaning on his sword, Beuno prayed for God to punish Caradoc, who fell to the ground dead.

Winefride grew in holiness, keeping her promise to be a virgin and live in poverty as a recluse. She became a nun and eventually an Abbess at a convent built on her father's land for young maidens.

A chapel was erected over the place where water had started to gush, and the same St Winefride's Well can be found in the town of Holywell, Flintshire, in Wales. It claims to be the oldest continually visited pilgrimage site in Great Britain; even the activities of King Henry 8<sup>TH</sup> couldn't stop them.

It is said that pilgrims who visited the shrine at Holywell experienced many miracles, which is proof of Winefride's sainthood.