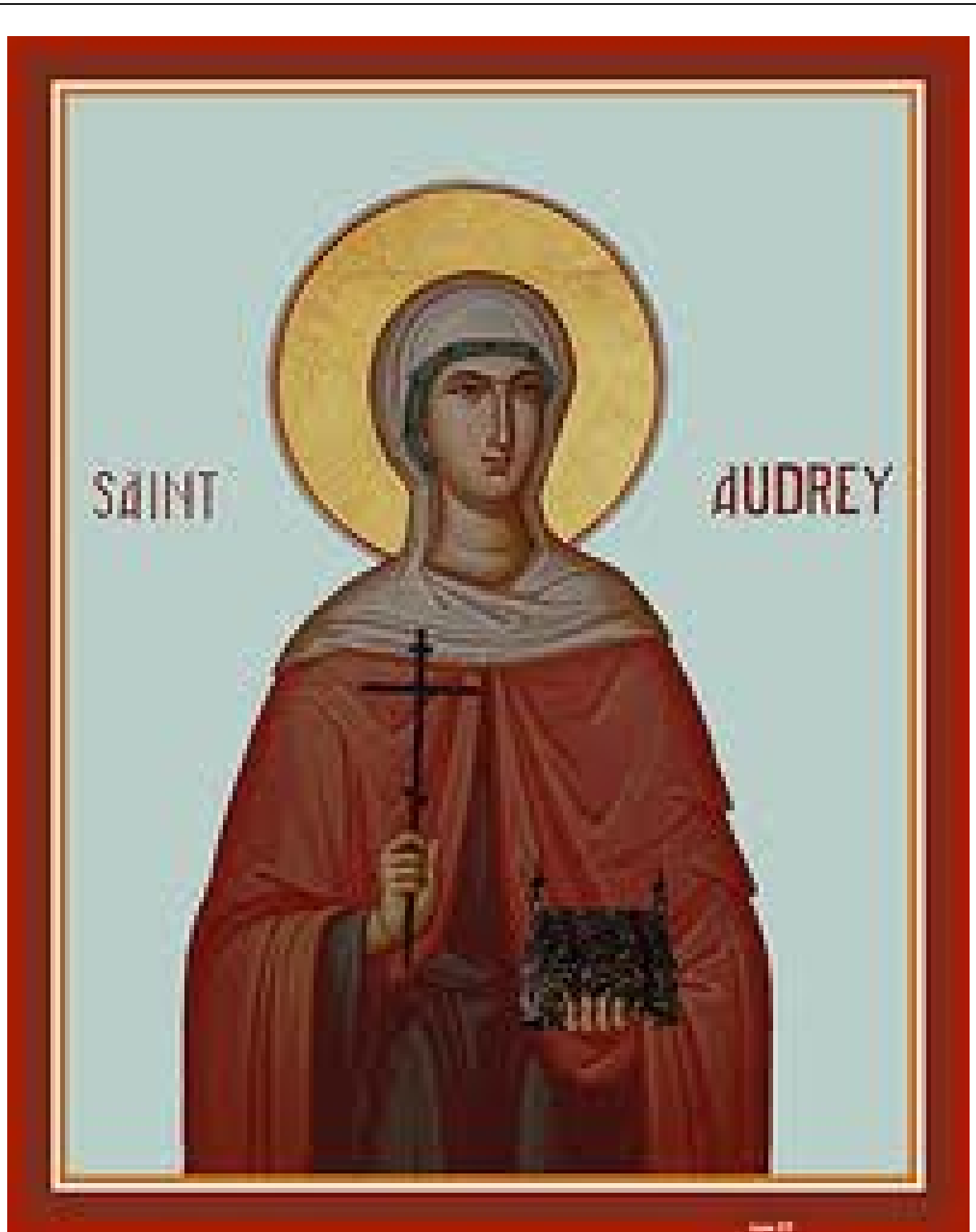


Audrey House



House Feast Day 23rd June
White Pastors

Who was St Audrey? She was an East Anglian saint and was a convert to Christianity. Audrey House is the house of pastors, preachers and saints dedicated to God as a monk or nun. Audrey was a nun dedicated to God. The colour of Audrey house is white, because this is the liturgical colour of pastors. If you go to Mass on her Feast day – the priest will wear a white vestment

St Audrey of Ely

Audrey was born in 630 on the royal estate of the East Anglian Kings at Exning in west Suffolk, and was the daughter of Anna, the future King of East Anglia. Her Old English name was 'Aethelthryth', meaning 'noble strength', which later came to take the form 'Etheldred' and then 'Audrey'. Baptised by the Apostle of East Anglia, St Felix, it was he who also instructed her in the Faith.

As a young woman Audrey was strongly drawn to the monastic life through the influences of St Felix and also St Felix' friend St Aidan and the disciple of the latter, the future Abbess Hilda. However, in c. 652 she was obliged to marry a noble from the Fens. As her dowry she received the town of Ely and the surrounding Isle. Before the marriage could possibly be consummated, her husband died in 655. Although she had hoped to start monastic life in Ely, in 660 she was once more for political reasons obliged to marry the fifteen-year old King of Northumbria and thus became the Queen of Northumbria. This marriage too she refused to consummate and probably often visited the monastery of her old friend St Hilda in Whitby. Finally, in 672 she separated from her husband by mutual consent and then began for her the life she had been destined for. Now at last she was made a nun at the monastery of St Ebbe in the north of England.

In 673 Audrey returned to Ely. Here she set up a monastery for both monks and nuns and became its Abbess. She donated to it extensive lands in east Suffolk around the town of Woodbridge. She lived here in an exemplary manner, leading 'a heavenly life in word and deed'. Giving up royal luxury, she wore simple clothes and ate only once a day. She spent many hours a day in church at prayer and obtained the gift of knowledge of the future. In fact she prophesied her own repose in 679.

In the year 696 it was discovered that her body was incorrupt, 'as if she had died and been buried that very day'. Several miracles occurred and it was clear that Audrey was a saint, as had long been thought. For centuries after St Audrey was venerated as a saint and became the greatest woman-saint of East Anglia. Her shrine in Ely attracted pilgrims from far and wide and many girls were and are still named after her. Even today her right hand remains intact and is venerated at the Roman Catholic Church in Ely. St Audrey is indeed a source of 'noble strength' for Christians today.