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Nov. 20, St. Edmund of East Anglia, King and Martyr

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NCR Today

Today is the feast of St. Edmund, King of the East Angles, martyred by the Danes in 869. His feast is celebrated by the Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church, and the Roman Catholic Church.

This icon illustrates various elements of St. Edmund's story. The Danes tied him to a tree and shot arrows at him until he "was all beset with their shots, as with a porcupine's bristles." They beheaded him and threw his head into the woods where a wolf guarded it until the King's followers came to retrieve it. In 1849 the tree that was believed to have been the site of Edmund's martyrdom fell down and was chopped up. An arrowhead was found at the heart of the tree.

Coins were struck in memory of St. Edmund within 20 years of his death. "The St Edmunds memorial coinage, current in East Anglia during the Danish rule, is a unique indication of the extraordinary reputation of Edmund, already recognised as a Saint."

His fame spread fast and far and echoes still. *St. Edmund, King and Martyr: Changing Images of a Medieval Saint*, edited by Anthony Bale, was published in August, 2009.

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