



Vox Clamantis

Bulletin of the Society of Saint Pius X in Scotland

August 2019

"The will to do, the soul to dare"

Dear Faithful,

After the last balmy days of July this year, the warm weather, the long days are possibly over. Nonetheless, I like, once a year, to remind our faithful of the concept of Christian modesty, particularly regarding how they dress to church but also how they dress generally.

The Catholic concept of modesty seems like the perfect antidote to pop culture's objectification of women (and, increasingly, of men, too). The trouble starts when the broad and nuanced idea of modesty becomes reduced to a set of *policies* and the sense of value, freedom, and community gets lost in formalism. It is more important to be humble, to value people for who they are and not what they look like, to cultivate inner beauty and a strong mind, and to lead others confidently.

In the Creation account, God breathes into the dust of the earth to make the first person. This is the essence of man. We are dust and spirit. It's a mystery, a gift, and a good – not a shameful – thing. We are often told that clothing arose originally simply to protect us from the elements but the true beginning of the need to cover ourselves is Original Sin. What had been perfectly ordered in God's creation now requires an effort of understanding and will. We cannot simply deny that there are natural reactions to facts of biology and anatomy, we now need to rein them in. We really can acknowledge that another person is beautiful and attractive in a wholesome, respectful way; that's part of how a healthy couple begins, but the moment we treat natural attraction as a licence to think or act inappropriately is the moment that lust can take root.

This is not controlling the reaction of others to ourselves. If we wear, say and do the right thing, we are not necessarily safe, respected, and well thought of. The truth is that even if we are above reproach, we still don't have insurance against someone else's harmful thoughts or behaviour. We are responsible *to* one another to be honourable in all ways. But that does not entail that we are responsible *for* each other's behaviour.

Priests have written much in the past about modesty. But it seems, over the centuries that the only things we agree on are that 1) it seems important and 2) we don't know what it looks like, because standards of modesty ebb and flow. When we look at what the Apostle teaches in the early Church (I Tim. 2), it



seems that he is more concerned about the flaunting of wealth and the early Church's preference for simplicity. Which implies that modesty should be seen in the context of the relationship restoration that is so central to Catholicism. If our goal as members in this Kingdom is to treat one another honourably, then it follows that we should steer clear of flaunting anything: besides square inches of skin, perhaps our wealth and accomplishments, too.

It is wrong too that women are inherently predatory, seductive, or dangerous – and, conversely, that men are helpless, animalistic, or out of control. Indeed, the inherent freedom of self-forgetfulness is lost by viewing ourselves through others' eyes, which is actually *self-objectification*. It casts us as objects in our own lives, not as agents of change, which is what we, as children of the God of restoration, are called to be. Being a Catholic woman doesn't mean putting a Catholic twist on the things that our culture expects of them. It means upgrading to something better. We need a compelling alternative. Otherwise, our solution is just to submit ourselves to rules, all the while feeling perhaps not a little resentful.

When Sacred Scripture talks about modesty, it doesn't create a set of culturally-bound standards and leave it at that. It praises a woman's strength and inner beauty, acknowledging these traits as timeless and godly – values that have survived countless debates on outer 'modesty'.

With every good wish and blessing,

Rev. Sebastian Wall (Prior)



St. Oswald, Saint and King



St. Mungo and St. John Ogilvie are familiar names from the litany of Scottish saints and in previous editions of *Vox Clamantis* we have examined lesser known ones such as St. Ninian and St. Nathalan. Others are, due to their accidental country of birth, nonetheless very much associated with Scotland, obvious examples being, of course, St. Andrew and St. Margaret. But we have to look deep into the annals of history to find out the Scottish roots of devotion to saints such as Oswald, King of Northumbria.



Northumbria around 700 AD

Scotland, as we saw in our article on St. Columba, didn't yet exist as a nation in the 7th century when Oswald was born. There were Scots in Dalriada, Picts and Britons in Strathclyde and Pictland and Angles in Lothian. This latter had, of course, been settled originally by the British as was Northumbria, hence the British names of its two constituent kingdoms, viz. Bernicia and Deira (effectively, modern Yorkshire). These were united under a common king by Oswald's father, Aethelfrith, who married Princess Aacha of the Southern kingdom but the Angles at that time were still pagan, along with King Penda to the South in Mercia. When Aethelfrith was killed in battle, Aacha's brother, Edwin, came to the throne and Oswald and his brothers fled to Dalriada for safety.

In some ways, this is the most significant period of Oswald's life since it was there that he spent most of his adult life and there that he converted to Christianity and was baptized. He stayed for 18 years, learnt the language and, after receiving a Christian education on Iona,

took an active part in the life of Dalriada. His uncle, Edwin, became Christian in 627 but was killed shortly afterwards by the British king Cadwallon of Gwynedd. Oswald's elder brother, Eanfrith, returned to the throne of Bernicia but almost immediately apostatised and, at any rate, was similarly killed by Cadwallon.

This is when Oswald decided to return to the country of his birth to restore unity to the two kingdoms since he had a parent from both, and more significantly evangelise them for the true faith. So, Oswald, at the head of a small army, (a small force of men lent by King Domnall Brecc of Dalriada including monks from Iona) marched south and met Cadwallon in battle at Heavenfield, near Hexham. Before the battle, Oswald had a wooden cross erected; he knelt down, holding the cross in position until enough earth had been thrown in the hole to make it stand firm. He then prayed and asked his army to join in.

Adomnan, in his *Life of Saint Columba*, offers a longer account, which Abbot Ségène had heard from Oswald himself. Oswald, he says, had a vision of St. Columba the night before the battle, in which he was told:

Be strong and act manfully. Behold, I will be with thee. This coming night go out from your camp into battle, for the Lord has granted me that at this time your foes shall be put to flight and Cadwallon your enemy shall be delivered into your hands and you shall return victorious after battle and reign happily.

Oswald described his vision to his council and all agreed that they would be baptised and accept Christianity after the battle. In the battle that followed, the British were routed despite their superior numbers; Cadwallon himself was killed.

Following his victory, Oswald was crowned king of Northumbria, and governed a kingdom that extended down the whole east side of the country from the Firth of Forth in



The cross at Heavenfield



the north to the Humber Estuary (and possibly beyond) in the South. Oswald then invited monks from the monastery of Iona to help him convert his subjects to Christianity.

The mission was initially under the control of a bishop named Cormán, but his approach was seen as unsympathetic (Bede says, austere) and he only succeeded in alienating those he was trying to convert. Cormán returned in failure to Iona in 635, and was replaced

by the man who became known as St. Aidan of Lindisfarne. Aidan chose the island of Lindisfarne as his base, and founded a monastery there. He then set out, with his supporters, to walk the length and breadth of Northumbria, with Oswald acting as his interpreter since the bishop initially spoke only Gaelic.

Over the years that followed he converted the Northumbrians through personal piety and the power of his example. Oswald strongly supported Aidan's work and, it is said that he played an important role himself in setting a Christian example.

Although Oswald is often considered a martyr for his death in battle against the pagans, Bede puts a clear emphasis on Oswald being saintly as a king, indeed, it has been noted that Bede never uses the word *martyr* in reference to Oswald. Bede's portrayal of Oswald stands out as unusual as a king regarded as saintly for his life while ruling, in contrast to a king who gives up the kingship in favour of the religious life, or who is venerated because of the manner of his death.

Bede recounts Oswald's generosity to the poor and to strangers, and tells a story highlighting this characteristic: on one occasion, at Easter, Oswald was sitting at dinner with Aidan, and had "a silver dish full of dainties before him", when a servant, whom Oswald "had appointed to relieve the poor", came in and told Oswald that a crowd of the poor were in the streets begging alms from the king. Oswald, according to Bede, then immediately had his food given to the poor and even had the dish broken up and distributed. Aidan was greatly impressed and seized Oswald's right hand, stat-

ing: "May this hand never perish". Accordingly, Bede reports that the hand and arm remained incorrupt after Oswald's death.

Oswald was killed in battle against Penda who had him dismembered with his head and limbs being placed on stakes. Bede says that the spot where he died came to be associated with miracles, and people took dirt from the site, which led to a hole being dug as deep as a man's height. Reginald of Durham recounts another miracle, saying that his right arm was taken by a bird (perhaps a raven) to an ash tree, which gave the tree ageless vigour; when the bird dropped the arm onto the ground, a spring emerged from the ground. Both the tree and the spring were, according to Reginald, subsequently associated with healing miracles.

Mercia, Penda's kingdom, was by now as "a big black blot of heathenism, untouched as yet by Christian effort" compared with the Saxons in the South and the Angles in the North (as well, of course, as the Celtic Christians in Wales and Scotland). Penda himself lived to a tremendous old age and had many children by his wife, Cunewise. He himself remained a pagan but all his children became Christian: Peada, King of Middle Anglia; Wulfhere and Aethelred, eventually Kings of Mercia; Merewalh, King of Magonset; St. Cuneburga, wife of King Alcfrith of Deira and Abbess of Castor; St. Cuneswith; St. Cunethrith *of Castor*; St. Edith *of Aylesbury*; St. Edburga *of Bicester*; and Wilburga, wife of King Frithuwold of Surrey. Though he was killed by Oswald's brother, Oswiu, during another of his incessant violent assaults on his neighbours, I like to think of the conversion of all his progeny as another of St. Oswald's miracles.

The St. Oswald church in King's Park, Glasgow and St. Oswald's in Maybole are of recent origin but Kirkoswald just down the road from this latter in Ayrshire dates back to 1244, built by monks to replace a smaller chapel which celebrated Oswald's victory at Heavenfield. Just as Oswald never forgot Scotland, it seems Scotland still has a place in its heart for St. Oswald.



Ruins of 13th century Kirkoswald in Ayrshire

Mass Schedule

	CARLUKE	GLASGOW	EDINBURGH
Thursday 1 st August			
Friday 2 nd August (<i>First Friday</i>)		6.30pm	
Saturday 3 rd August (<i>First Saturday</i>)			11am
Sunday 4 th August — 8 th Sunday after Whitsun		10.30am	11am
Monday 5 th August			
Tuesday 6 th August — Transfiguration			
Wednesday 7 th August			
Thursday 8 th August	11am		
Friday 9 th August		6.30pm	
Saturday 10 th August		11am	
Sunday 11 th August — 9 th Sunday after Whitsun		10.30am	11am
Monday 12 th August	11am		
Tuesday 13 th August	11am		
Wednesday 14 th August	11am		
Thursday 15 th August — Assumption		6.30pm	12.30pm
Friday 16 th August		6.30pm	
Saturday 17 th August		11am	11am
Sunday 18 th August — 10 th after Whitsun		10.30am	11am
Monday 19 th August	11am		
Tuesday 20 th August			6.30pm
Wednesday 21 st August			7am
Thursday 22 nd August — Immaculate Heart	11am		
Friday 23 rd August		6.30pm	
Saturday 24 th August		11am	11am
Sunday 25 th August — 11 th after Whitsun		10.30am	11am
Monday 26 th August	11am		
Tuesday 27 th August			6.30pm
Wednesday 28 th August	11am		
Thursday 29 th August	11am		
Friday 30 th August		6.30pm	
Saturday 31 st August		11am	11am

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If you require any further information concerning one of these places, or need to talk to a priest e.g. in case of emergency for the Sacraments, please ring the phone number mentioned in contact details.