



Vox Clamantis

Bulletin of the Society of Saint Pius X in Scotland

September 2020

"The will to do, the soul to dare"

Dear Faithful,

This month's main article is about St. Cuthbert, whose feast of translation is celebrated on the 4th (his main feast is on 20th March, which, since it always falls in Lent, precludes any lavish celebration). That his body now rests in the splendid Cathedral in Durham is a testimony of the apostolic nature of the early Celtic monks and their desire to spread the Faith far beyond the borders of what is now Scotland. Because of the Viking raids, his body did come, briefly, back to Melrose, the site of his origins. Nowadays there is a 6 day walk from Melrose, passing by three great Border abbeys – Melrose, Jedburgh and Dryburgh – and unspoilt villages. You can touch the Rhymer's Stone; visit the home of a mediaeval dragon in Linton or a massive Iron Age hill fort at Yeavinger Bell; travel through the sweeping Eildon and Cheviot Hills; stroll along the River Tweed; cross the border between Scotland and England; and find brief shelter in St. Cuthbert's Cave like the monks carrying his coffin did before you (it is unlikely this was a site of his eremitical life though it is often presented as such). Finally, the way crosses the causeway – only exposed at low tide, to Holy Island off the coast of Northumberland. Its length would probably make a traditional pilgrimage along it impractical today but there are many sites in Scotland itself, some of which have been alluded to in past editions of the *Vox Clamantis* and others which I'd like to look at later. Suggestions for such a pilgrimage would be most welcome.

St. Giles starts off the month. His site of pilgrimage is near Toulouse in France and devotion to him in Scotland (like that of St. Leonard) dates back to the Crusades. The present building, called St. Giles' Cathedral, in Edinburgh, could hardly be seen as a place of pilgrimage, but *is* an image of the extremely varied religious, political and architectural history of this country.

Two days later, we celebrate the Feast of our holy Patron, St. Pius X. It is hard to see how the many priests now celebrating the traditional Mass in Glasgow, Edinburgh and elsewhere would exist some sixty years after the Council, without the founding of the Society back in 1970.

There are various other important feasts scattered throughout the month before we celebrate, towards the end, the celebration of the Dedication of the Basilica of St. Michael, surely a key figure in these times of diabolical disorientation.

Many thanks to those who continue to support the upkeep of our beautiful garden at the back of church and the continual supply of fresh flowers to beautify the church during the celebration of Holy Mass.

After an extended period when visiting a church and attending Holy Mass was prohibited and with an eye on the continued hysteria surrounding a virus whose principal symptom during the Summer seems to be perfectly good health, it is certainly possible such prohibitions may return. Take advantage now of the possibility to attend as many Masses as you can.

With every good wish and blessing,

Rev. Sebastian Wall (Prior)

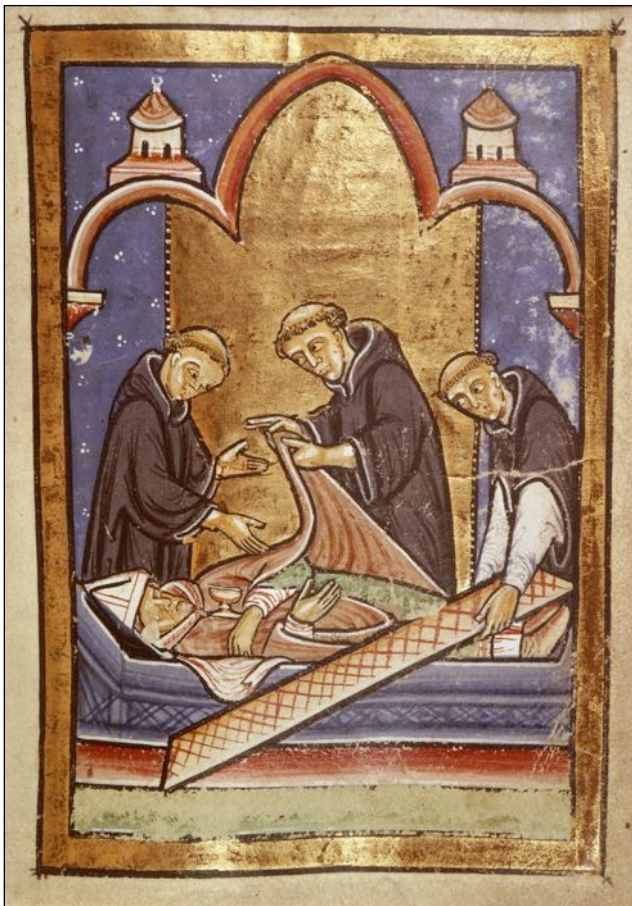




ST. CUTHBERT THE WONDERWORKER



Like St. Columba, but unlike most of the other Celtic saints, St. Cuthbert has the advantage of an early biographer; in fact he had two, one of whom was the internationally known St. Bede, so his life was widely known relatively soon after his death. Of course, biography in the 7th century was not what it is today, nonetheless, we may know enough of the facts of his movements and sanctity to be sure that his influence spread far beyond Melrose, in the Lowlands, and Lindisfarne where he spent much of his life. Certainly the county of Kirkcudbright, in Dumfries and Galloway, owes its name to the church of Cuthbert and indeed is the only county in this country which takes its name from an individual.



*Finding St. Cuthbert incorrupt,
from a 12th century manuscript*

Some of the facts of his early life still remain uncertain since they were considered less important than the example he gave as a monk (he is venerated as a Bishop, though he was bishop of Lindisfarne only in the last few years of his life). I have called him a Celtic saint because of his form of piety which is so typical of the Celtic saints of the period and his role in the great controversy of the time regarding the calculation of the date of Easter, where he took the

Celtic position. Secular histories will give him the title of Anglo-Saxon saint because he was born in the Kingdom of Northumbria which at that time extended far into Lothian. Indeed, Scotland at that time did not exist as a nation, though these are accidents of geography. He was born, possibly near Dunbar, into a noble family. Again, there is some claim to Anglo-Saxon parents but there is a strong case that his lineage goes back to Dalriada or even Ireland. At any rate, he was fostered in an area of Lammermuir, near the Abbey of Melrose, a foundation of Iona by Aidan himself. This was a common practice among noble families at the time. There is some evidence that, in his youth, he had some military training and could ride a horse which seems inconsonant with the story of him being a poor shepherd looking after flocks during the night (he may have been on a military watch). Certainly, when he was around 17, it was in these hills that he had a vision of a celestial company crossing the sky at an hour that proved to be that of the death of St. Aidan in Lindisfarne.

Following this vision, Cuthbert sought entry in the monastery at Melrose where the Abbot was Eata and the Prior, St. Boisil. He stayed there, edifying the community with his diligence and piety until a new Scottish foundation was set up in Ripon, some ten years later. Cuthbert was sent there and took up the duties of the Guestmaster with Eata as Prior.

Northumbria, which had been converted by Celts, kept the ancient Celtic Church customs including the old (and inaccurate) calculation for the date of Easter. This was bound to create a certain tension between the kingdoms to the South, which had been evangelised directly from Rome with an improved method of calculation since 567. In the North, however, it needn't necessarily have created problems for the Celtic monks. The king of Northumbria, Oswy, had, however, taken a Saxon wife from the South and when one year she was already celebrating Easter while the King was keeping Lent, matters came to a head. Ripon adopted the Roman usage and the Scottish monks decided to return to Melrose in 661. This was just in time for the death of the Prior, St. Boisil, who spent the last week of his life listening to Cuthbert reading him the Gospel of St. John. Cuthbert was made Prior in his stead.

In 664, the Synod of Whitby settled the matter. This was not a simple case of the Saxons following the Roman calculation and the Celts having come up with some primitive method of their own. They themselves had

adopted an earlier Roman usage and due to “their small number, placed in the utmost borders of the earth” (Pope Honorius) had had no cause to come in contact with the improved method. The Abbot of Lindisfarne, at that time St. Colman, was the chief spokesman for the Celtic observance and he spoke with dignity and intelligence. The spokesman for the See of York, soon to be the primatial see of all the



Cuthbert's Gospel (of St. John), taken from his coffin

North, at least temporarily, was the bishop Wilfrid. He might well have avoided much friction had he been more conciliatory but some of his arguments were neither sound nor wise and, though the King decided in favour of the modern usage, Colman, conceding the primacy of Peter's Chair, nonetheless returned to Iona and thence to Ireland. Iona kept the old usage for long afterwards but since Southern Ireland had accepted the modern one in 634 and the Northern Irish in 697, its influence declined from then on.

Eata and Cuthbert accepted the decision and were sent to Lindisfarne to bring the more obtuse monks “by the modest power of patience” to conformity. Despite his rank, Cuthbert still maintained an austere life and a simplicity which he kept even as Bishop of Lindisfarne in later years. Even in Melrose, alongside his missionary activities in Lothian, he liked to retire to a small hermitage in Dull, Perthshire. Here he often retired to the tiny island off the coast of Lindisfarne and once the important work of settling the monastery in good Roman customs he moved permanently to the Isle of Farne where he spent long periods in solitary prayer.

There are many tales of his wonderful dealings with animals, whose confidence he gained by his godly life. Bede indeed says that we would all have this ability but we lose it through our neglect of the service of the Lord of Creation. He was fed by an eagle while a missionary in Lothian, and he sheltered the Eider ducks (still called, locally, Cuddy's [Cuthbert's] ducks) when the weather was particularly foul. While on a mission to some nuns down in Coldingham, he would leave the monastery late at night and go down to the sea, into

which he walked up to his armpits praying in the cold water. This is an ancient Celtic practice which can be seen in the lives of many of the early saints of this period including St. Beuno who used to pray on a rock in the icy cold stream created by St. Winifred's head. When Cuthbert came out of the water in the morning, he then knelt on the shore and prayed kneeling. Two otters then came and rubbed themselves against his feet to dry and warm them with their fur. Some of the animals were initially recalcitrant. When he later built a small guest house on Farne for visitors, two ravens would persistently steal the straw from his roof. After many reproofs, Cuthbert finally banished them from the island. Three days later, however, they came back, croaking at him plaintively as if begging pardon and, on the condition they stole no more, both parties were reconciled.

In 684, Cuthbert was made Bishop of Lindisfarne. He accepted this charge very reluctantly, apparently only after the personal insistence of the King himself. After a brief stay at his new See, he finally retired back to Farne where he died on 20th March, 687.

After many peregrinations, he finally found rest in an impressive shrine in Durham Cathedral, (the final resting place of St. Bede too) where he was visited by thousands of pilgrims every year. Each time his body was moved it was found to be incorrupt with pliable limbs as if he were simply sleeping. The shrine itself was destroyed by the ‘reformers’ in 1542. Though they too found the body incorrupt, later exhumations have only revealed a skeleton, leading to some to believe that the real body of Cuthbert was taken and replaced before it was interred under the plain stone now behind the High Altar.

There are many churches dedicated to St. Cuthbert throughout Scotland. The present Victorian one in Edinburgh is built on the site of at least 6 earlier constructions and was the original parish from which St. Giles was created.



St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh

Mass Schedule

	CARLUKE	GLASGOW	EDINBURGH
Tuesday 1 st September — St. Giles			6.30pm
Wednesday 2 nd September	11am		7am
Thursday 3 rd September — SAINT PIUS X	11am		
Friday 4 th September (<i>First Friday</i>)	12 noon		
Saturday 5 th September (<i>First Saturday</i>)		11am	11am
Sunday 6 th September — 14 th after Whitsun		10.30am	11am
Monday 7 th September	11am		
Tuesday 8 th September			6.30pm
Wednesday 9 th September			7am
Thursday 10 th September	11am		
Friday 11 th September	12 noon		
Saturday 12 th September — Most Holy Name of Mary		11am	11am
Sunday 13 th September — 15 th after Whitsun		10.30am	11am
Monday 14 th September — Exaltation of the Holy Cross	11am		
Tuesday 15 th September			6.30pm
Wednesday 16 th September	11am		
Thursday 17 th September	11am		
Friday 18 th September	12 noon		
Saturday 19 th September		11am	11am
Sunday 20 th September — 16 th after Whitsun		10.30am	11am
Monday 21 st September	11am		
Tuesday 22 nd September			6.30pm
Wednesday 23 rd September	11am		
Thursday 24 th September	11am		
Friday 25 th September	12 noon		
Saturday 26 th September		11am	11am
Sunday 27 th September — 17 th after Whitsun		10.30am	11am
Monday 28 th September	11am		
Tuesday 29 th September — Dedication of St. Michael			6.30pm
Wednesday 30 th September	11am		7am

Contact details:

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Resident priests:

Rev. Fr. Sebastian Wall (Prior)

Rev. Fr. Anthony Wingerden

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**Saints Margaret and Leonard's
Church**

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EDINBURGH

EH8 9RD

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.