



Vox Clamantis

Bulletin of the Society of Saint Pius X in Scotland

April 2023

"The will to do, the soul to dare"



Dear Faithful,

The first week of this month is devoted to our contemplation of our Saviour's Passion and then, for the following three weeks to our celebration of His glorious Resurrection from the dead. Whereas last month was marked by fasting and other works of mortification, a very fitting relaxation of culinary discipline is one expression of our joy at this victory over Hell and Satan. The traditional dinner in Scotland, as in many other places, is lamb. The Jewish tradition of the Paschal lamb and St. John the Baptist's calling our Lord the 'Lamb of God' is possibly behind this.

One cannot, however, overlook the sudden appearance of a preponderance of this delicacy not only over the Lammermuir Hills of East Lothian and Berwickshire (where sheep are known as the Lammermuir lion) but throughout Scotland at this time of the year. Egg rolling, which probably has an origin in the Beltane celebration of the movement of the sun, was easily appropriated by the Scots as a symbol of the rolling away of the stone at the tomb. The actual practice presents, in itself, no difficulty – one needs eggs and some sort of incline, widely available in the undulating landscape of Scot-



land. The problem comes when the hill is too steep and the eggs are smashed or not steep enough and the eggs don't roll. We should, nonetheless, not give way to gluttony in our zeal for celebrating the great mystery of our Faith. One of the last acts of Parliament passed in 1551 before the so-called 'Reformation' was known as the 'sumptuary laws'. Archbishops, bishops and earls were limited to no more than eight 'dischis of meit' at any one meal; abbots, lord priors and deans could have no more than six; barons and freeholders were limited to four; while burgesses and other 'substantious' men were allowed just three, 'and bot ane kind of meit in everie dische'.

This month's main article gives one possible explanation for the disappearance of the Old Caledonian Forest which once covered much of the Highlands. It consisted principally of Scots pine, intermingled with birch, rowan, juniper and, particularly in the west, oak. Sir Robert Gordon described the forest at his time as being 'full of reid deer and roes, woulffs, foxes, wyld catts, brocks, skyurells, whittrets, weasels, otters, martrixes, hares and fumarts'. Curiously, although parts of the forest have often been destroyed by fire during its history, it's regrowth now (it occupies a relatively small area around the Cairngorms) is the overgrazing of the red deer.

I wish you all the graces of a very Blessed Easter,

With every good wish and blessing,

Rev. Sebastian Wall (Prior)





St. Gilbert, Dragonslayer of Caithness



Dornoch Cathedral

Back in August last year, I mused on the saints of the far north North of Scotland on the occasion of looking at the history of St. Drostan. This month, I would like to look at a saint of the High Middle Ages and his possible links with St. Duthac – St. Gilbert of Caithness, whose feast day falls on the 1st of this month. He was born around 1185 (thus excluding him from the possibility of being the famous Gilbert who spoke at the Council of Northampton in 1176 in favour of Scottish ecclesiastical independence from the see of York). He is sometimes credited as the ‘high steward to several monarchs’, though this is only partly true as he was also Archdeacon of Moray before being appointed to the stormy See of Caithness in 1222.

Our Gilbert was the son of one Muiredach, son of Alexander *de Moravia*. This name did not indicate an origin in the Eastern part of what is now the Czech Republic, but refers to the ancestral home of the family being Moray though they were probably of Flemish origin. His name may be originally Flemish or the usual anglicisation of a Gaelic name (Alexander, for example, refers to Alisdair). So he could have been known as *Gille Brigitte*, or in modern orthography, *Gillebrighde*. He allegedly had a younger brother, Richard, who was killed fighting against Scandinavians and whose effigy-sarcophagus currently resides in the cathedral at Dornoch. He is also known to have had an older brother John, and a younger brother, Simon. Freskin de Moravia came North from his lands in Lothian as part of an army of King David I to put down another rebellion by the men of Moray, and it is thought that Gilbert was a cousin of William de Moravia, who became 1st Earl of Sutherland in 1230.

It is not known how Gilbert entered the Church but, as was often the case in the Middle

Ages, his education and wealth made him an easy choice for becoming archdeacon of Moray, being appointed by King Alexander II, with responsibilities for secular and religious government in a notoriously turbulent area. His enemies there set fire to his account-books; their survival was believed to be a miracle. The episcopal See of Caithness was at that time in Halkirk just South of Thurso. In 1222, a revolt against the tithe, imposed by the Bishop, Adam of Melrose, led the local husbandmen to lay siege to the cathedral kitchen, and burn it down, with the Bishop still inside. Ironically, Adam’s predecessor, John, had himself had his eyes and tongue removed by Harald Maddadsson, Earl of Orkney and Mormaer of Caithness in 1201, for resisting increases of taxation on the peasantry (Peter’s Pence). There are today no remains of the Halkirk cathedral church or the bishop’s seat and since Gilbert owned estates in and around what is now Dornoch, the episcopal See was moved there after the murderers had been punished. Gilbert himself commissioned (and paid for) the Cathedral Church to be built (now the parish church) as well as residences for ten canons, and the provision of several hospices for the poor. The statues for the new Cathedral were modelled on those of Moray and Lincoln. The bishop himself was in theory based at Skibo Castle (later to become the Bishop’s Palace and now the site of an exclusive Country Club) but spent much of his time in the violent North



An artist’s impression of how Scrabster Castle may have looked in the 13th century

in the now ruined Scrabster Castle and had considerable influence in the education and civilisation of that part of his diocese. Even modern authors have said he was one of the noblest and wisest ecclesiastics the mediaeval Church produced. It is there that he died in 1245 though he was taken to the Cathedral he had built in Dornoch for burial. His relics were subsequently

venerated and oaths sworn on them until at least 1545.

The link with St. Duthac is a curious one. He was from the same area, but of different stock. A Gaelic speaker he had studied in Ireland, forming part of the Scoto-Irish intellectual tradition. While documentary evidence allows us to trace the career of Gilbert and provides the date of his death, Duthac is a more shadowy figure. Traditionally the saint has been identified as one 'Dubthach the Scot' who died in Armagh in 1065. However, Hector Boece,

who published his history of Scotland in 1527, had heard that Duthac had lived and died in the late 12th and 13th centuries and had acted as the mentor of Gilbert of Caithness. He was not however, entirely convinced by this account, noting that others claimed Duthac had lived long before then.



The 13th century date, and the link with Gilbert, was accepted by two post-reformation writers with connections to Easter Ross. John Leslie noted in his 1578 work that Duthac had lived during the reign of William I (1165-1214). David Chambers, whose work was published posthumously in 1631, was more precise, noting that the saint had died in 1253.

It is not certain that Duthac was the man who died in Armagh in 1065 or 1253. The cult that developed at Tain could equally have been based around one of a number of other holy men with the same name recorded in Ireland and Scotland in the early Middle Ages. The reason for the connection between Duthac and the 13th century, made by Boece, Leslie and Chambers, may have been folk memory of a translation of the relics of the saint from Armagh to Tain in that period, as is suggested by local tradition, or by efforts to promote the cult to a wider audience in the same period.

Between 1359 and around 1530, however, this previously local cult spread across the kingdom, with dedications to the saint found in most of the large burgh churches and as far south as Ayr and Kelso. In the latter part of the 15th century the saint and his shrine at Tain were also adopted by the royal house, most visibly during the reign of James IV. Mediaeval writers possibly connected Duthac to Gilbert to provide this otherwise shadowy Northern saint with a firm place within the orthodox Scottish Church hierarchy or there may indeed have been a direct or indirect link. We can't know.

Finally, I would like to include a legend, recorded in the 19th century but long in folk memory, which gives an interesting activity, quite removed from preaching and administration. Dragons in Scottish tradition are overwhelmingly associated with water, not with fire. They live in lochs or wells or the sea; their breath may be poisonous but is not described as hot; they cannot fly; and indeed in a number of cases it is fire that proves fatal to them. There is, however, one significant exception. The destruction of much of the northernmost part of the ancient Caledonian Forest is blamed in folklore on a monster both winged and fiery. Scandinavian cultural influence was always strong in Caithness and Sutherland, and might perhaps account for such an un-Scottish dragon, which would certainly be more at home in an Icelandic saga. Other legends of St. Gilbert have a distinctly Norse flavour – he even possessed a magic hammer which could fly from his hand and return to it like Thor's *Mjolnir*; though the saint's was used in cathedral-building, not troll-smiting. Forest fires have never been rare in the region but for a single historical fire to have generated legends in both Dornoch and far to the North, (there are versions nearly 55 miles away), it would have to have been on a truly catastrophic scale.

“There lived once upon a time in Sutherland a great dragon, very fierce and strong. It was this dragon that burnt all the fir woods in Ross, Sutherland, and the Reay country, of which the remains, charred, blackened, and half decayed, may be found in every moss. Magnificent forests they must have been, but the dragon set fire to them with his fiery breath, and rolled over the whole land. Men fled from before his face, and women fainted when his shadow crossed the sky-line. He made the whole land desert. And it came to pass that this evil spirit, whom the people called the ‘beast’ ... came nigh to Dornoch as near as Lochfinn, and when he could see the town and spire of St. Gilbert, his church – ‘Pity of you, Dornoch’, roared the dragon. ‘Pity of you, Dornoch’, said St. Gilbert, and taking with him five long and sharp arrows, and a little lad to carry them, he went out to meet the ‘beast’. When he came over against it he said, ‘Pity of you’, and drew his bow. The first arrow shot the beast through the heart. He was buried by the townspeople. Men are alive now who reckoned distance by so or so far from the ‘stone of the beast’ on the moor between Skibo and Dornoch. The moor is planted, and a wood called Carmore waves over the ashes of the destroying dragon”.

Mass Schedule

	Carlisle	Glasgow	Edinburgh
Saturday 1 st April (<i>First Saturday</i>)		11am	11am
Sunday 2 nd April — Palm Sunday		10am	10am
Monday 3 rd April	11am		
Tuesday 4 th April	7.15am		
Wednesday 5 th April	7.15am		
Thursday 6 th April — Maundy Thursday		7pm	7pm
Friday 7 th April (<i>First Friday</i>) — Good Friday		3pm	3pm
Saturday 8 th April — Holy Saturday		10.30pm	10.30pm
Sunday 9 th April — Easter Sunday		10am	11am
Monday 10 th April	11am		
Tuesday 11 th April	11am		
Wednesday 12 th April	7.15am		
Thursday 13 th April	11am		
Friday 14 th April	7.15am		
Saturday 15 th April		11am	11am
Sunday 16 th April — in Albis (Low Sunday)		8.30am & 10am	9am & 11am
Monday 17 th April	11am		
Tuesday 18 th April			6.30pm
Wednesday 19 th April	7.15am		
Thursday 20 th April	11am		
Friday 21 st April	7.15am		
Saturday 22 nd April		11am	11am
Sunday 23 rd April — Second after Easter		8.30am & 10am	9am & 11am
Monday 24 th April	11am		
Tuesday 25 th April			6.30pm
Wednesday 26 th April	7.15am		
Thursday 27 th April	11am		
Friday 28 th April	7.15am		
Saturday 29 th April		11am	11am
Sunday 30 th April — Third after Easter		8.30am & 10am	9am & 11am

Contact details:

Telephone: 01555 771523

Email: standrews@fsspx.uk

Resident priests:

Rev. Fr. Sebastian Wall (Prior)

Rev. Fr. Reid Hennick

**Saint Andrew's
House**

**31, Lanark Road,
CARLUKE**

ML8 4HE

**Saint Andrew's
Church**

**202, Renfrew Street,
GLASGOW**

G3 6TX

**Saints Margaret and Leonard's
Church**

**110, Saint Leonard's Street,
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.