

### Reflection Wednesday week 22 St Aidan 2022

**St Aidan (- 651)**, a native of Ireland, was a monk on Iona. When the Christian King Oswald returned from exile on Iona to his kingdom of Northumbria, he invited the monks of Iona to provide missionaries to instruct his people in Christianity. After initial difficulties, Aidan was consecrated bishop and sent with a group of Irish monks to begin this task. He established a monastery on Lindisfarne which became the centre of a major missionary effort in the North of England. The monastery became a valuable centre of learning and provided important training and education for English boys who continued the evangelisation. From Lindisfarne Aidan journeyed throughout Northumberland and worked closely with King Oswald who found him a wise adviser and a good personal friend. After Oswald's death in 642, Aidan continued this work under his successor, Oswin, but when Oswin was killed nine years later, Aidan did not long survive him and died two weeks later in 651. According to Bede, Aidan cultivated peace and love, purity and humility; he was above anger and greed, and despised pride and conceit; he set himself to keep and teach the laws of God, and was diligent in study and in prayer. His influence on the North of England was enormous. He laid a solid foundation for the spread of the Gospel in the centuries after his death.

At a meeting in Iona, an angry brother spoke about his failure, telling of the hardness of heart in the kingdom of Northumbria, a land of darkness refusing the life-giving light, inhabited by a stubborn, unreachable people. Hearing this Aidan prayed 'O Lord, give me springs and I will water this land. I will go, Lord. I will hold this people in my heart.' He continued 'Perhaps, my brother, if you had spoken with more gentleness, and of the love of Christ, giving them the gospel to nourish them like milk is given to a tiny baby, then you would have won them and remained among them.'