

Reflection Thursday Week 21 St Aidan & Saint of Lindisfarne 2023

St Aidan, 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 the island of Lindisfarne which became the centre of a major missionary effort in Northern England. The monastery became a valuable centre of learning and an important training ground for the education of English boys to continue evangelising. Aidan journeyed throughout Northumberland, usually on foot, and working 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 himself was killed nine years later, Aidan did not long survive him and died two weeks later in 651. According to Bede, Aidan was a man of great gentleness and moderation, outstanding for his energetic missionary work. His influence in Northern England was enormous, and his wise promotion of Christian education among the native English laid the solid foundation for the spread of the Gospel in the centuries following his death. Aidan and his fellow saints were certainly *wise and faithful servants of Jesus giving their householders food at the proper time*. He leaves us the following prayer:

Leave me alone with God as much as may be.
As the tide draws the waters close in upon the shore,
Make me an island, set apart,
alone with you, God, holy to you.

Then with the turning of the tide
prepare me to carry your presence to the busy world beyond,
the world that rushes in on me
till the waters come again and fold me back to you