

## Reflection Friday Week 1 St Aelred 2024

**St Aelred of Rievaulx** was born in Hexham about **1109**. At an early age he went to serve King David of Scotland where he rose to become Master of the Royal Household. However, he felt attracted to religious life but was still attached to his court life and to King David. After considerable personal struggle, aged 24, he gave up his secular pursuits and entered the newly founded Cistercian monastery of Rievaulx in Yorkshire (1133). At 34 he took charge of a new foundation in Lincolnshire. But within four years he had returned to Rievaulx as Abbot where he remained for the rest of his life. He died in **1167**.

Aelred is remembered for his energy and gentleness. His writings and sermons were characterised by a deep love of Scripture and a personal love of Christ '*as friend and Saviour*'. He showed sensitivity and understanding towards his fellow monks and under his direction the monastery at Rievaulx grew to extraordinary numbers. His health was not robust. The last ten years of his life was marked by a long and painful illness. As Abbot he had to visit monasteries in England, Scotland and France, and the physical suffering and exhaustion this incurred was considerable. In the last year of his life, he was left helpless on his bed unable to speak or move for an hour after celebrating Mass.

Aelred was a singularly attractive figure, a man of great spiritual power but also of warm friendliness and humanity. He has been called the St Bernard of the North.

- *No medicine is more valuable, none more efficacious, none better suited to the cure of our temporal ills than a friend to whom we may turn for consolation in time of trouble, and with whom we may share happiness in time of joy.*
- *Charity may be a very short word, but with its tremendous meaning of pure love, it sums up man's entire relation to God and to his neighbour.*
- *Friendship is that virtue by which spirits are bound by ties of love and sweetness and out of many are made one.*