

## Aidan's Way Day 15

# Saint Cuthbert

Thank you for joining me in prayer on this the fifteenth day of my three-week pilgrimage from the Scottish island of Iona to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, walking 300 miles in the footsteps of Saint Aidan, praying the Bible together each day in our usual way.<sup>1</sup> This is a big day when I will finally arrive at Melrose Abbey where I will tomorrow begin my final trail to Lindisfarne along Saint Cuthbert's Way. Today therefore we will be celebrating the life of Saint Cuthbert.<sup>2</sup>

(Want to know more about this unique series on pilgrimage? Check out the special introductory day, "An Introduction to Pilgrimage").

## Pause

*As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly, to re-centre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.*

**Pause and pray**

## Prayer of Approach

*High King of Heaven, would You walk with me and talk with me as I seek to follow in the footsteps of Your servant Aidan today? I have set my heart on pilgrimage, so challenge me and change me, cleanse and rearrange me, until the fire that burned in Aidan's heart, burns brightly in mine.*

# Rejoice and Reflect

The magnificent, pink-stoned buttressed ruins of Melrose Abbey remind me of Iona Abbey, and the words from Psalm 84 that I prayed there right back at the start of this pilgrimage:

How lovely is your dwelling place,  
O LORD of Heaven's Armies.  
I long, yes, I faint with longing  
to enter the courts of the LORD.  
With my whole being, body and soul,  
I will shout joyfully to the living God.

**Psalm 84:1-2 (NLT)<sup>3</sup>**

## Pause and pray

Cuthbert was born around 635, the year that Aidan started his work on Lindisfarne, and he would grow up to become not only Aidan's successor as bishop of Lindisfarne, but patron saint of Northumbria and one of the most venerated heroes of faith the British Isles have ever known. Two golden threads are woven through his life: miracles, and a lifelong passion for prayer.

Firstly, the miracles: At the age of seven Cuthbert was playing in a field one day when a three-year-old boy called out: 'Holy Cuthbert, priest and prelate.' He laughed it off, but the child continued to prophesy, saying: 'It does not become you to be playing among children, when the Lord has appointed you to be a teacher of virtue even to those who are older than yourself.'<sup>4</sup> This was to be the defining moment in Cuthbert's young life; it inspired him to seek God in prayer.

Ten years later, now aged seventeen, Cuthbert was minding sheep in the Lammermuir Hills when he saw a strange, bright light in the night, descending and ascending in the east, carrying, it seemed, a man. When later he learned that Aidan had died that very night, he determined to follow in the great man's footsteps by joining the monastery in Melrose which had recently been planted by Aidan himself.

The young monk took to travelling, preaching, teaching, and moving in the power of the Holy Spirit. Bede's *Life of St Cuthbert*, written not long after his death, is little more than a catalogue, 42 chapters long, of Cuthbert's many miracles. These include seven prophecies and premonitions, three demonic deliverances, nine nature miracles, two resurrections from the dead, and eleven healings, including that of Walstod, a poor fellow whose only claim to fame is that Cuthbert healed his diarrhoea!

Some of the miracle stories around Cuthbert must have been embroidered over time, but Jesus expected His disciples to 'cast out demons; ... speak in new tongues... lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover' (Mark 16:17b-18, ESVUK). The ancient Celts understood that the supernatural infuses the natural realm, and that 'the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power' (1 Cor. 4:20, NIVUK).

# Ask

Have I downgraded my faith and stopped praying for miracles? I imagine Jesus asking me the same question He asked Bartimaeus: 'What do you want me to do for you?' (Mark 10:51). How do I reply?

**Pause and pray**

The Apostle Paul urges me to 'eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy' (1 Cor 14:1) and this was certainly an important aspect of Cuthbert's life and ministry. And so I ask the Holy Spirit now to give me a word, a scripture, or a picture, to encourage someone today.<sup>5</sup>

**Pause and pray**

# Yield

Miracles were the first golden thread running through Cuthbert's life, and the second was prayer. Moving from Melrose to Lindisfarne and craving a more contemplative existence, Cuthbert eventually transferred to the remotest place he could find: the island of Inner Farne, two miles out to sea. He stayed there and prayed in total solitude for eight years until the King himself arrived begging Cuthbert to become a bishop. After just two years as Bishop of Lindisfarne, Cuthbert sensed that his days were drawing to a close and retired again to Inner Farne, where he died on 20th March, 687 at the age of 53. Cuthbert's final words, recorded by Bede, were an appeal for unity: 'Always keep God's peace and love among you,' he said, 'be of one mind.'<sup>6</sup>

**Pause and pray**

## Yielding Prayer

Cuthbert's example challenges me deeply to realign my priorities away from public profile towards a deeper life of private prayer:

*My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me." And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming." (Psalm 27:8, NLT)*

## Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me assures me with these words:

*"You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD."*

**Jeremiah 29:13-14a (ESVUK)**

## Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,  
being true to You, in every way.  
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,  
being kind to everyone I meet.  
Spirit, help me to love the lost,  
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.  
Amen.*

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<sup>1</sup>You can follow Pete's pilgrimage and hear the occasional song inspired by the journey on 'The Pilgrim Podcast' available at [www.PeteGreig.info](http://www.PeteGreig.info).

<sup>2</sup>We are celebrating Cuthbert's life today, although his actual feast day is 20th March.

<sup>3</sup>During this season of pilgrimage, many of our 'Rejoice' Scriptures will be drawn from the so-called 'Pilgrim Psalms' (84, 120-134), prayed by God's people approaching Mount Zion on the three annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

<sup>4</sup>Bede's *Life of St. Cuthbert*, trans . J.A. Giles (public domain), Ch. 1.

<sup>5</sup>For practical guidance on exercising and growing in the prophetic gift, see Pete Greig's book *How to Hear God: A Simple Guide for Normal People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan / London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2022).

<sup>6</sup>Bede's *Life of St. Cuthbert*.