

W E E K L Y M E D I T A T I O N

August 31: St. Aidan, Bishop of Lindisfarne

The story goes that the missionaries to the English in Northumbria (northeast England), on returning to their home monastery on Iona, reported the English to be exceptionally resistant to the Gospel and the mission a failure. On hearing this one of the young monks of the community, Aidan, said: "Perhaps you were too harsh with them, and they might have responded better to a gentler approach." Having offered his opinion he ended up being sent as leader of a second missionary effort. (In this there is surely something to be learned about making comments!) He based his missionary group on Lindisfarne, an island off the northeast coast. He reposed in AD 651.

The wonderful church historian and saint, the Venerable Bede, wrote concerning St. Aidan of Lindisfarne: "He neither sought nor loved anything of this world, but delighted in distributing immediately to the poor whatever was given him by kings or rich men of the world. He traversed both town and country on foot, never on horseback, unless compelled by some urgent necessity. Wherever on his way he saw any, either rich or poor, he invited them, if pagans, to embrace the mystery of the faith; or if they were believers, he sought to strengthen them in their faith and stir them up by words and actions to alms and good works."

In short, Aidan combined an enthusiastic sharing of the faith with good works offered in a generous spirit. He was gentle. His preaching and service to the needy were simple and direct. He had great strength of character. He sets us a good example - and is surely a heavenly intercessor for all who seek to share their faith and to minister to others.

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