

**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.**

The Prayer of St Aidan

#### **Horse and cart**

King Oswin once gave Aidan a horse and a cart for his journeys (the bishop usually traveled on foot). Soon after this, Aidan met a beggar and gave him the horse and cart. The king heard of this and was disturbed by it. He asked Aidan why he had given the royal gift away when there were ordinary horses in the stables which were more suitable for a beggar. Aidan rebuked him, asking if the king regarded the foal of a mare more highly than the Son of God. At first, he did not understand. Then he fell at the bishop's feet, weeping tears of repentance. Asking for forgiveness, Oswin promised never again to judge Aidan's charitable deeds.

Aidan raised the king to his feet, declaring that he had never seen a king who was so humble. He prophesied that Oswin would soon depart from this life, since the people did not deserve such a ruler. His prophecy was soon fulfilled, for Oswin was murdered at Gilling on August 20, 651. Aidan departed to the Lord on August 31, less than two weeks later. He died at Bamburgh, by the west wall of the church. The beam on which he was leaning to support himself still survives, even though the church was twice destroyed by fire. The beam may still be seen in the ceiling of the present church, above the baptismal font.

On the day Aidan died, Cuthbert was a young man tending his master's sheep. Looking up, Cuthbert saw a vision of angels bearing someone's soul to heaven in a sphere of fire. Later, he learned that Bishop Aidan had died at the very hour that he had seen the vision.

At first, the holy bishop Aidan was buried at Lindisfarne on the right side of the altar in the church of Saint Peter. In 664 the Synod of Whitby declared that all the churches of Britain must follow Roman practices, and that Celtic customs were to be suppressed. Colman, the third Bishop of Lindisfarne, was unable to accept this decision. Therefore, he decided to retire to Iona, taking the bones of Saint Aidan with him. Celtic customs survived on Iona until the eighth century.

<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2007/08/31/102445-st-aidan-the-bishop-of-lindisfarne>.

#### **Ebbs and flows**

As soon as he came to the throne, King Oswald was anxious that all the people whom he ruled should be filled with the grace of the Christian faith, of which he had had so wonderful an experience in his victory over the heathen. So he sent to the Irish elders among whom he and his companions had received the sacrament of baptism when in exile, asking them to send him a bishop by whose teaching and ministry the English people over whom he now ruled might receive the blessings of the Christian faith and the sacraments. His request was granted without delay, and they sent him Bishop Aidan, a man of outstanding gentleness, holiness, and moderation.

On Aidan's arrival, the king appointed the island of Lindisfarne to be his see at his own request. As the tide ebbs and flows, this place is surrounded by sea twice a day like an island, and twice a day the sand dries and joins it to the mainland. The king always listened humbly and gladly to Aidan's advice in all things, and diligently set himself to establish and extend the Church of Christ throughout his kingdom. Indeed, when the bishop, who was not fluent in the English language, preached the gospel, it was most beautiful to see the king himself acting as interpreter of the heavenly word for his ealdormen and thanes; for he himself had obtained perfect command of Irish during his long exile.

Aidan himself was a monk from the island of Iona. He gave his clergy an inspiring example of self-discipline and continence, and the best recommendation of his teaching to all was that he taught them no other way of life than that which he himself and his followers practised. He never sought or cared for any worldly possessions, and loved to give away to the poor who chanced to meet him whatever he received from kings or wealthy folk. Whether in town or country, he always travelled on foot unless compelled by urgent necessity to ride; and whatever people he met on his walks, whether rich or poor, he stopped and talked with them. If they were heathen, he invited them to accept the mystery of the faith; if they were Christians, he strengthened their faith, and inspired them by word and deed to live a good life and to be generous to others.

Aidan's life was in marked contrast to the apathy of our own times, for all who walked with him, whether monks or layfolk, were required to meditate, that is, either to read the Scriptures or to learn the psalms by heart. This was their daily occupation wherever they went. If wealthy people did wrong, he never kept silent out of respect or fear, but corrected them publicly. He would never offer money to influential people, but would always offer them food whenever he entertained them. And if the wealthy ever gave him gifts of money, he either distributed it for the needs of the poor, or else used it to ransom any who had unjustly been sold into slavery. In fact, many of those whom he ransomed in this way afterwards became his disciples; and when they had been instructed and trained, he ordained them to the priesthood.

[contd.]

# HYMNS FOR ST AIDAN

SP 293    **Loved with everlasting love**

1. Loved with an everlasting love,  
led by grace that love to know;  
Spirit, breathing from above,  
you have taught me it is so.  
O what full and perfect peace,  
joy and wonder all divine!  
In a love which cannot cease  
I am his, and he is mine.
2. Heaven above is softer blue,  
earth around is richer green;  
something lives in every hue,  
Christless eyes have never seen:  
songs of birds in sweetness grow,  
flowers with deeper beauties shine,  
since I know, as now I know,  
I am his and he is mine.
3. His for ever, his alone!  
Who the Lord from me shall part?  
With what joy and peace unknown  
Christ can fill the loving heart!  
Heaven and earth may pass away,  
sun and stars in gloom decline,  
but of Christ I still shall say:  
I am his and he is mine.

WORDS: George Wade Robinson 1838-1877

MUSIC: CALON LÂN John Hughes 1872-1914 arr. John Barnard 1948—



## Ebbs and flows (contd)

Death came to Aidan when he had completed sixteen years as a bishop while he was staying at a royal residence near Bamburgh. Having a church and cell there, he often used to go and stay at the place, travelling around the surrounding countryside to preach. When he fell ill, a tent was erected for him on the west side of the church, so that the tent was actually attached to the church wall. And so it happened that, as he drew his last breath, he was leaning against a post that buttressed the wall on the outside. He passed away on the last day of August 651, in the seventeenth year of his episcopate, and his body was taken across to Lindisfarne and buried in the monk's cemetery.

*A Reading from The History of the English Church and People by the Venerable Bede (670-735) in Robert Atwell, Celebrating the Saints: Daily Spiritual Readings to Accompany the Calendars of The Church of England, The Church of Ireland, The Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church in Wales (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 2010), pp. 494-95.*

CC 41    **Christ, grant me grace to let me wash my feet**

[TIS 282]

1. Christ, grant me grace to let you wash my feet,  
and washed, to let them stand or walk or run,  
as over mountain, desert, city street,  
they bring good news, unlikely victory won.
2. Christ, grant me grace to wash another's feet,  
and count it cause for neither shame nor boast,  
nor think some merit makes my work complete  
since those forgiven most will love the most.
3. Christ, grant me grace to wash another's feet,  
and count it cause for neither shame nor boast,  
nor think some merit makes my work complete  
since those forgiven most will love the most.
4. Christ, grant me grace to live, obey and love,  
sent to your world, commanded by your word;  
content if you direct my every move,  
your name be known, your kingly voice be heard.

WORDS: Christopher Idle 1938—



Aidan 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 in 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, to strengthen them in their faith and stir up by words and actions to alms and good works.

The Venerable Bede, Monk of Jarrow, Scholar, Historian (c.670-735)