



30th Week of Ordinary Time: 24th/25th October

World Mission Sunday and St Cedd (Feast 26th October)

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

Podcast: St Cedd: a Missionary Bishop

“We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard.”

A year last August (2020) we had a break in the “lockdown” and it was possible to travel in England for holiday, with, in my case, a “Pilgrimage” purpose in mind. With a Priest friend I headed for North York Moors via York. Sadly, many historic Church buildings were difficult to access, due to Covid restrictions. In the case of York Minster itself, we found, though it was open, you had to book well ahead. We were fortunate however to be able to join the small local community for Vespers, a memorable and beautiful occasion. Having failed to get into the Shrine of St Margaret Clitherow in the Shambles and the Barr Convent, we travelled on to the Moors and visited again the ruins of Rievaulx Abbey; well worth the journey at any time. The Surprise, a special one, was Lastingham Abbey which was new to us both, and the place where the relics of St Cedd are to be found in the Crypt of the present Norman Church. I am happy to have the opportunity to recall this because it is the Feast of St Cedd (brother of St Chad, Patron of the Archdiocese) on Tuesday of this week, 26th October. One of the websites I visited to research more about St Cedd speaks of Lastingham as “the home of the evangelists of Middle Britain”. Hence a link also to World Mission Sunday which is celebrated this year on Sunday 24th October, the thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, which is the occasion of this Reflection.

A Saxon Monastery was established in Lastingham in the mid-7th Century. Later Cedd moved south to spread the word among the Pagan East Saxons leaving his more famous brother, St Chad in charge. He too moved south soon afterwards and settled in Lichfield. St Cedd founded what is now just the remains of the walls of the Nave of a Celtic Cathedral at Bredwell-on-Sea in Essex. It is said to be the last outpost of Celtic Christianity (and I propose to visit it one day before too long!). Happily, I hear it is very much alive today, with regular daily worship.

Cedd moved back to Lastingham where he died of the Plague on 26th October 664. The present Church on the site of the original Saxon Monastery Church is Norman, and the Crypt where St Cedd’s Shrine is preserved dates back to those Saxon times. Sadly, when we visited we were unable to go to the Shrine due to Covid restrictions, so a return visit will have to be made!

Cedd founded many Churches. He also founded Monasteries at East Tilbury and Bradwell. He remained Abbot of Lastingham in his native Northumbria to the end of his life, while maintaining his position as a Missionary Bishop and Diplomat. He often travelled far from the Monastery in fulfilment of his duties. His brother Chad, who

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succeeded him in these duties did the same. Cedd and his brothers (there were 4 of them) regarded Lastingham as a Monastic base, providing intellectual and spiritual support, and a place of Retreat. Cedd delegated daily care of Lastingham to other Priests, and it is likely that Chad operated similarly.

The theme chosen by the Holy Father for World Mission Sunday this year is taken from the Acts of the Apostles Chapter 4 Verse 20 “we cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard.” In his message for World Mission Sunday, Pope Francis says: “Once we experience the power of God’s love we cannot help but proclaim and share what we have seen and heard. Jesus’ relationships with the disciples and his humanity shows us the extent to which God loves our humanity and makes his own our joys and sufferings, our hopes and our concerns.”

It seems to me this is what fired up the Missionary Bishops in the days of St Cedd and St Chad. And, reading the Gospel for the 30th Sunday, the healing of the blind beggar Bartimaeus, highlights just how Jesus wants to reach out to us in our brokenness. Over and over again, He is seen inviting those He cures and cares for to a deeper relationship with Him. Bartimaeus was last of those called to “following Him along the road” as He was about to enter Jerusalem, which led to His suffering and death. Bartimaeus was about to discover as a Disciple of Jesus that the “Son of David” was to be a different Messiah from the one many anticipated.

I conclude with this prayer from the memorial of St Cedd (and St Chad):

*O God, who called your servants
the Bishops St Chad and St Cedd
from among the English who first turned to Christ your Son
and made them ministries of grace to their own people,
grant, we pray, at their intercession,
that we may imitate them in a peaceful and humble spirit
and a prayerful life,
and so commend to others
the faith which we ourselves profess.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.*

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