

## Work and Prayer

How would you answer if asked what you consider to be 'holy'? Perhaps some of the more obvious answers would include Scripture (we talk about holy writ) or God Himself, the Holy Trinity. Perhaps you would talk about holy Church, the holy Sacraments, holy men and women. I doubt very much that within that list you would think about, or even want to add, work; the work of our hands. And yet when we stop and think about it, our work is what takes up the bulk of the day. For many, work is drudgery; it is a means to paying the bills, to getting a pension in order to *retire from work*. Work gets in the way of doing the things we want to do with our lives, and within this mindset we soon discover that a large part of our lives are wasted in discontent and the idea that in some way work could be seen as holy is delusional.

St Benedict has some very sound teaching on the nature of work, and how we can raise it from the level of some sort of necessary inconvenience into the arena of the holy.

In the Prologue to his Rule, we are immediately alerted to the potential spiritual nature of work, when we do what we do, but we do it because Jesus with us in our work. St Benedict says, "First of all when you do a good work, you must pray to Him most earnestly to bring it to perfection." And then a little further he says, "Seeking His workman in a multitude of people, the Lord calls out to him and lifts His voice again." When we desire to be God's workmen, the work of our human hands can create gifts that sustain us and bless the world around us. For Benedict and the followers of his Rule, the tedium of the daily grind is lifted into the realm of the holy because he links the world of work with the need to constantly pray. There is a phrase that is associated with Benedictines, 'Ora et labora': pray and work (often work and pray). With this attitude, work not only draws us very close to a state of prayer, but it can become prayer itself.

## Saints and Heroes

We know very little about Aidan's early life, except that he was probably of Irish descent, and from an early age was a monk on the island of Iona, in the monastery that had been founded by St Columba. In 633, King Oswald gained the crown of Northumbria and vowed to bring Christianity back. He requested that missionaries were sent from Iona. At first they sent Bishop Croman, but his methods were harsh and alienated many people, he returned to Iona and was replaced by Aidan. Aidan, with 12 other monks founded a monastery on Lindisfarne and Aidan was made bishop in 635. An Irish speaker, Aidan had to learn English as he went about his missionary work. His missionary work was inspirational; he would walk from one village to another, politely talking to the people he met and slowly interesting them in Christianity. He took an interest in their lives and communities and spoke to them on their own level. By doing this, he patiently and slowly restored Christianity to Northumbria. He built churches across the area and was known for his simplicity of life and care for the poor. Aidan died in the year 651.

### From the Fathers

A great fullness of spiritual comfort and joy in God comes into the hearts of those who recite or devoutly intone the psalms as an act of praise to Jesus Christ. They drop sweetness in the men's souls and pour delight onto their thoughts and kindle their wills with the fire of love, making them hot and burning within, and beautiful and lovely in Christ's eyes.

Richard Rolle (1300-1349)

30th August 2020 The Twelfth Sunday  
after Trinity  
22nd Sunday  
of the Year

## Take up your Cross



There was once a very wise monk who had been taken ill in the monastery where he had spent much of his life, but was now hospitalised where he would spend his last days. Every day the Father Abbot would come to see him, they would say the Midday Office, the monk then received the Sacrament and afterwards the Abbot blessed the monk and left.

After many days and after the monk had received the Sacrament, he said very calmly to the Abbot, "Father, it is time for you to administer the Last Rites and give me your final blessing, because I hear the Lord calling me. The Abbot, somewhat taken aback, did exactly as he had been asked and then left the monk alone. About a half-hour later, he went back into the room and the monk had died and looked totally at peace – he was at one with God.

Whilst for that monk he was blessed with what can only be described as a perfect and beautiful death, such peace at the end is something most of us can only hope and pray for.

However much we prepare for death, inevitably we also, in some measure, are afraid of the day and all too often the passage from this life to eternity is distressing for those left alone.

When Peter rebuke's Jesus for upsetting them with the prediction of His suffering and death, it is the passage to glory with God's angels that upsets Peter, more than anything. But as Christ says, to achieve eternity we must take up the same cross as His to become His disciples, and that becomes our preparation for death and to be at one with God.

To be reconciled with our discipleship now can bring peace now, and lead to peace with God in eternity.