

Readings: 1 Corinthians 2: 10 – 16; Psalm 119 (118) 9 – 14; Matthew 7: 21 – 29.

Bede was a Saxon, born in Northumbria about AD 680, some fifty years after the first preaching of the Gospel in that kingdom. When he was seven years old his parents gave him to the monastery of Saint Peter in Monkwearmouth, from which he later moved to its linked foundation of Saint Paul in Jarrow, where he remained as a monk for the rest of his life.

The monastery was a great centre of learning, with (for its time) an extensive library. Bede was a devoted scholar: among his writings were lives of the saints, works on poetry and chronology and twenty-five biblical commentaries. But the work by which he is best known today is his

Ecclesiastical History of the English People, which tells of the development of the Church among the Anglo-Saxons, from the mission of Saint Augustine in 595 to the consecration of Tatwine as ninth archbishop of Canterbury in 731.

Bede's health began to fail during Lent 735. He had said: "I have lived a long time and the Holy Judge has provided well for me during my whole life. The time of my release is near; indeed my soul longs to see Christ my king in all his beauty".

An account of his death tells that he spent his last days singing the psalms and working on a translation into English of the Gospel of John. On the Eve of Ascension Day, having been told that the translation was complete, he sat on the floor of his cell and died, singing 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.'

He was buried in Jarrow, near the church in which he had worshipped, and which still stands. A legend tells that his title 'The Venerable', perhaps originally the usual title for a priest, derives from an angelic hand which filled in a space in the inscription on his tomb with the word *Venerabilis*.

On hearing of Bede's death, Boniface, a missionary from England to Germany, wrote "the candle of the Church, lit by the Holy Spirit, was extinguished."

In the eleventh century his relics were translated to Durham, where they now rest in the Galilee chapel at the west end of the Cathedral. Above his tomb is a copy of some of his words:

*Christ is the Morning Star, who, when the night of this world is past,
brings to his saints the promise of the light of life, and opens everlasting day.*