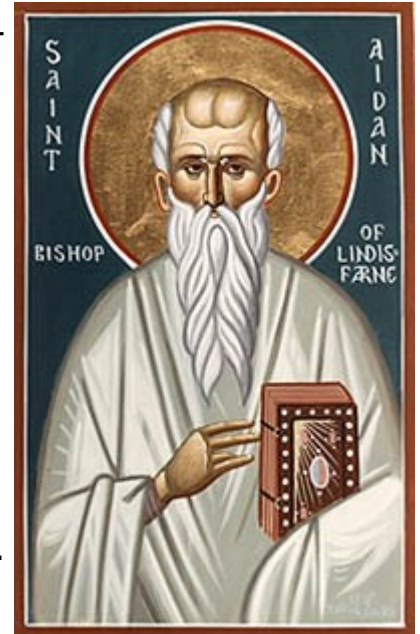


St. Aidan of Lindisfarne

August 31

Our father among the saints, Aidan of Lindisfarne, Enlightener of Northumbria (?-651), was the founder and first bishop of the monastery on the island of Lindisfarne, off the northeast coast of England. A Christian missionary, he is credited with restoring Christianity to Northumbria (Northern England). An Irishman by birth, Aidan was a monk at the monastery on the island of Iona in Scotland. The Roman Empire had spread Christianity into England, but due to Rome's decline, paganism was seeing a resurgence in Northern England. St. Oswald of Northumbria had been living at the Iona monastery as a king in exile since 616 A.D., and was converted and was baptized there. In 634, having gained the crown of Northumbria, he was determined to bring Christianity to the mostly pagan people there. Due to his past at Iona, he requested missionaries from that monastery, instead of the Roman-backed monasteries in England. Aidan chose the island of Lindisfarne as his diocese. King Oswald, who spoke Irish Gaelic, often had to translate for Aidan and his monks, who did not speak English at first. When Oswald died in 642, Aidan received continued support from King St. Oswin of Deira, and the two became close friends.



By patiently talking to the people on their own level, Aidan and his monks slowly restored Christianity to the Northumbrian communities. In 651, a pagan army attacked Bamburgh and attempted to set its walls ablaze. According to legend, Aidan prayed for the city, after which the winds turned and blew the smoke and fire toward the enemy, repulsing them.

Aidan's friend, St. Oswin of Deira was murdered in 651. Twelve days later Aidan died, on August 31, in the seventeenth year of his episcopacy. He had become ill while at the Bamburgh castle, and died leaning against the wall of the local church.