

WORKSHEET 5

How Aidan came to Lindisfarne

Chapter 3: King Oswald wanted all of his people to receive the Christian faith, because he was so pleased to have won a battle that made him ruler. So he sent to Iona, asking them to send him a bishop, to teach and care for the English people he ruled. He was finally sent Bishop Aidan, a man of true humility, holiness and self-control in all things, who cared deeply about doing God's will.

When Aidan arrived he asked to be given the island of Lindisfarne, and the king agreed. At this place, the tide rises and falls twice a day, so it is surrounded by the waves of the sea like an island; and again, twice in the day, so when the shore is left dry, it becomes part of the land.

The king willingly gave Aidan all the help he needed to build up the church in his kingdom. It was wonderful to see the king himself interpreting the words of God from Aidan to his commanders and ministers, because he had perfectly learned the language of the Scots and Irish during his long time away on the island of Iona.

From that time on, many Scottish and Irish monks came to help. Churches were built in several places, and the people joyfully flocked together to hear the word. Oswald provided money and lands to build monasteries. And so the English, great and small, were instructed in how to live the good Christian life.

Chapter 5: Aidan didn't teach people to do anything that he wouldn't do himself. He wasn't interested in possessions - if any rich man gave him anything, then Aidan delighted in giving it away to the poor as soon as possible.

He would often travel through towns and countryside on foot, never on horseback unless he really had to. Whoever he met, be they rich or poor, he would invite them (if they were unbelievers) to share his faith, or if they were believers, to strengthen them, stirring them up by words and actions to do acts of charity.

Exploring Christianity Creatively

www.barnabasinschools.org.uk

Everyone who worked with him was told to spend time thinking hard on the things of God - which meant either reading the Bible or learning to sing psalms. This was his daily routine wherever he and his team went. If he was invited to eat with the king, he went with one or two helpers, and having eaten a little, would soon hurry off to get on with something more important.

Many people copied his habit of fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year, except during the 50 days after Easter. He never gave money to the powerful men of the world, but only food, when they were visiting; and, if (on the other hand) *he* was given gifts of money by rich visitors, he either shared it out among the poor or used it to ransom ('buy back') slaves so they could be set free. Many of those he ransomed later became his followers, and some even became priests.

However, it must be said, that when King Oswald first asked the monks of Iona to send him a teacher, they first sent him another man (Corman) who was a lot more strict. He met with little success, and the English really disliked him. When he returned home to Iona, he complained that he hadn't been able to do any good in England, because the English were uncivilised, stubborn and good-for-nothing. What was to be done next? The Council of Iona felt embarrassed that King Oswald had been so disappointed.

Then Aidan (who was also present in the council) said to the complaining priest (Corman), 'I think, brother, that you were far too strict with your listeners. They needed a gentle touch. You should have started with teaching them the simpler, easier things from God's word before moving on to the harder things.'

Having heard this, everyone weighed up what he had said and decided that Aidan deserved to be quickly made a bishop and sent back to instruct the unbelieving English. This was a man who clearly knew when to speak and when to be silent. And so he made his way into England to meet their friend, King Oswald, and to preach God's word - and time proved him to be the right man for the job.

(Adapted from *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Book 3)