

## THE FRIENDS' 2007 PILGRIMAGE TO NORTHUMBRIA—SEPTEMBER 2007

*I invite you to return home with me, to north-east England, to walk in the footsteps of holy men and women who lived a long time ago, in the seventh and eighth centuries.*

These were the opening words of Cardinal Hume's book **Footprints of the Northern Saints** that inspired a party of thirty Friends to follow him in discovering these people for themselves. It was a very rewarding journey. We travelled to Newcastle by train, and on leaving the station were astonished to find ourselves facing a friendly welcome from the outstretched arms of the bronze statue of none other than Cardinal George Basil himself. A great



*The Friends in Newcastle*

start !

Who were these Northern Saints ? They were men and women who introduced, or rather re-introduced Christianity to England after the fall of the Roman Empire when the pagan Anglo-Saxons immigrants had taken over much of the land.

Two were kings who had converted from paganism and died defending their fledgling Christian kingdoms: Edwin (ruled 617-33) and Oswald (ruled 634-42). The others were monks, nuns and bishops who spread the Gospel throughout

Northumbria, then to neighbouring kingdoms in England, and later further afield into Europe. From Rome came Paulinus – a monk whom Pope Gregory the Great had originally sent to Kent (died 644); from Ireland came Aidan (d. 651); native Anglo-Saxons included Cuthbert (634-87), Wilfrid (633-709), Benedict Biscop (628-89), Bede (673-735), Cedd (d.664) and Chad (d.672); Theodore of Tarsus (d.690) was a Greek and Hilda (614-80) was the great-niece of King Edwin who became Abbess of Whitby.

Britain had been colonised by immi-

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## FRIENDS OF THE HOLY FATHER

### THE FRIENDS' 2007 PILGRIMAGE TO NORTHUMBRIA (CONT'D)

grants from time immemorial. The Emperor Claudius completed the Roman conquest of Britain in AD 43 and there is evidence for the presence of Christianity here soon afterwards. Constantine the Great was proclaimed Emperor at York in 306 and it was he who promoted Christianity by making it the official religion of the Empire. The departure of the legions in 410 led to a power vacuum that was filled by an influx of pagan Anglo-Saxons, who forced Christian communities into enclaves in the south and west.

Britain in the 7<sup>th</sup> century was a patchwork of small kingdoms. Northumbria, a large area of England north of the river Humber, consisted of two kingdoms – Deira to the south of the river Tees and Bernicia to the north. Anglo-Saxon kings were always fighting among themselves and when one overran the other, the loser was forced into exile. In 604 Edwin lost Deira and fled to the protection of the king of East Anglia but was re-instated in 616. Edwin in his turn went on to conquer Bernicia and drove out the pagan ruling family, including the princes Oswald and Oswy into exile to Iona, in the Irish kingdom of Dal Riata. Edwin extended his kingdom as far north as the spur of rock in the Pentland Hills overlooking the Firth of Forth where he built the first castle with a settlement known as Edwin's burgh – Edinburgh - and established a church there dedicated to St. Cuthbert. Edinburgh was in the Diocese of Lindisfarne until the ninth century.

In order to advance his status, Edwin sought the hand in marriage of Ethelberga, the Christian daughter of King Ethelbert of Kent. This request was granted on condition that Edwin presented no obstacle to the free practice of Ethelberga's religion and that he would consider becoming a Christian himself. Accordingly, the princess, accompanied by her entourage, with her chaplain Paulinus, set off for the north to marry this pagan king of Northumbria. Pope Boniface V sent letters to Edwin encouraging him to convert to Christianity and to Ethelberga asking for her assistance in this



*Reconstruction of Edwin's palace at Yeavington*

matter.

The Friends visited Yeavington in Glendale, the site of Edwin's timber headquarters discovered by aerial photography in the 1950's. Archaeologists uncovered the remains of huge timber buildings with a feasting hall where perhaps Edwin would have consulted his advisers on whether to deny their pagan Gods and embrace Christianity. Nearby was the auditorium where Paulinus preached and converted the king, and the river Glen in the valley where he laboured for 36 days baptizing the king's subjects. The site is now covered up again and we were left to imagine the unfolding of the story. Bede describes St. Paulinus as being tall with a slight stoop, with black hair, a thin face and a narrow aquiline nose, whose presence was venerable and awe-inspiring.

Paulinus' work in the north came to an abrupt end in 633 when King Edwin was killed in battle by Caedwallon, the Christian leader of the Welsh, accompanied by the pagan king Penda of Mercia. Paulinus with Ethelberga and their companions returned to Kent and Cad-

wallon proceeded to despoil Northumbria.

When Oswald had fled Northumbria as Edwin took the throne in 616, he had become a refugee at the monastery on Iona. His family was befriended by the monks and he became a Christian. On reclaiming his kingdom of Northumbria Oswald challenged Cadwallon in battle. Greatly outnumbered, he erected a Cross and assembled his small force to pray before it for victory. Oswald won the day and his men embraced Christianity. We visited the site north of Hexham called Heavenfield where one of the great battles of English history had assured the spread of Christianity across north and central England.

Oswald ruled from his fortress at Bamburgh Castle, uniting the whole of Northumbria. He sent to Iona for a missionary bishop to bring the Gospel to his largely pagan kingdom. Aidan arrived and, as he only spoke Irish Gaelic, the King himself served as translator when Aidan preached to his subjects. Oswald gave him the nearby island of Lindisfarne on which to establish a monastery. Aidan met with great success and was made bishop of the new See of Lindisfarne. Many Northumbrians embraced the Faith and Christianity was soon firmly established in the kingdom. Oswald met his death in 642 in battle with the pagan King Penda of Mercia, who dismembered his body and hung the parts on a tree at the place now known as Oswestry in Shropshire. He was acclaimed a saint at once and his cult quickly spread far and wide.

We drove to the island of Lindisfarne on a narrow causeway which floods with each high tide. On the Island we celebrated Mass in the newly refurbished Catholic Chapel of St. Aidan, then explored the ruins of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Benedictine monastery of St. Mary. Lindisfarne Castle was restored by Sir Edwin Lutyens a century ago and, amazingly, in the bleak landscape we found a tiny walled garden designed by Lutyens' friend Gertrude Jekyll which provides a surprisingly colourful aspect from the castle.

One of the great monk-bishops of Lindisfarne was the seventh century St. Cuthbert. He preferred a life of solitude and we saw the little island off Lindisfarne where one can visit the ruins of his hermitage. When the Vikings destroyed Lindisfarne in 875 the monks fled with St. Cuthbert's body, St. Oswald's head and other relics. They wandered for many years before finally settling in Durham.

Seeking an ever more secluded life he moved to the more remote Inner Farne Island where he built another hermitage, ending his days there. It was a beautiful calm morning when we boarded the boat to sail to the Farne Islands. We circled the rocks with many



*Heavenfield*



*St Cuthbert's Chapel—Inner Farne*

seals viewing us quizzically as we passed, and were accompanied by a great variety of sea-birds.

On the Inner Farne we were able to celebrate Mass in St. Cuthbert's Chapel which in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had been restored as a memorial to the heroine Grace Darling who, with her father, had rowed into a raging storm to rescue the crew of a stricken ship that had hit the rocks.

St. Wilfrid, educated at Lindisfarne, Rome and Lyons, was a great bishop, founder of monasteries and builder of churches, the finest being at Ripon and Hexham. Wilfrid visited Rome in 653 and on his return became Abbot of Ripon where he introduced the Rule of St. Benedict for the first time in England, and adopted the Roman or western method of calculating Easter, which was celebrated on a different day from that used by the Irish. Ireland had been cut off from Europe for a century and, although retaining universal Catholic practices, had retained the now obsolete method of calculating Easter dating from the time of St. Patrick. To settle this problem Oswy, then king of Northumbria (ruled 642-70), called a Synod at Whitby in 664 to settle the issue. Wilfrid was the chief spokesman for the Roman practice which Oswy accepted, and the Synod adopted. Unity was soon re-established, enabling Archbishop

## FRIENDS OF THE HOLY FATHER

Theodore of Canterbury to map out the dioceses of the whole country that remain much the same today.

Our visit to Hexham began with Mass in the Abbey Church where St Wilfrid had established a monastery and built the church which, at the time, was reputed to be the finest north of the Alps. The church itself was destroyed by the Danes in 810 but Wilfrid's tiny crypt remains, where one can see the building materials used dating from the Roman era. The crypt had originally housed a relic of St Andrew, brought from Rome by St Acca, Wilfrid's successor at Hexham, whose memorial cross we saw in the church. Another remarkable survival from that time is Wilfrid's black marble throne.

The day ended with Bishop Kevin Dunn, the bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, joining us for dinner and sharing our enthusiasm for the Northern Saints. Mgr. Ralph Brown rose to give a warm response on behalf of us all.

The following day our journey took us on to Monkwearmouth and Jarrow in the footsteps of St. Benedict Biscop. A considerable figure in the early church of Anglo-Saxon England, he founded twin monasteries, one dedicated to St. Peter at Monkwearmouth, the other to St. Paul at Jarrow. He visited Rome on several occasions bringing back books and decorative objects. He also brought John, the arch-cantor of St. Peter's, to Northumbria who introduced the monks to the Roman liturgy. On a later occasion Benedict accompanied a new Archbishop of Canterbury, Theodore of Tarsus, from Rome to England.

We celebrated Mass at St. Peter's where the tower from the early church still stands, then visited St. Paul's



*St Peter's, Monkwearmouth*

at Jarrow where Bede spent most of his life and wrote his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.

Our visit to Durham began with Mass in the Catholic Church of St. Cuthbert before going on to Durham Cathedral. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century St. Cuthbert's tomb in the Cathedral had been opened and relics removed before re-interring the saint's bones. These relics are now on display in the Cathedral Treasury. They are of great importance and indeed the gold-embroidered vestments in which Cuthbert's body was re-interred in the 9<sup>th</sup> century remain in perfect condition, the finest such Anglo-Saxon textiles to be seen anywhere. The workmanship of St. Cuthbert's gold pectoral cross echoes the contemporary high-status Sutton Hoo treasure now to be seen in the British Museum. Fr Nicholas Kavanagh led us in prayer at St. Cuthbert's simple tomb before we visited the resting-place of Bede in the Galilee Chapel.

Another trip took us to the charming village of Lastingham where the Saxon church is associated with two Northumbrian brothers, St. Cedd and St. Chad. The church has a remarkable crypt, where the remains of St. Cedd lie next to the altar, which is unique in having an apse, a nave and side-aisles. St. Cedd was educated at Lindisfarne and in 653 was sent to Essex to preach the Gospel, later becoming Bishop of the East Saxons. He founded many monasteries including the one at Lastingham where he died in 664. His brother St. Chad succeeded him there as abbot.

St. Chad later travelled far and wide, going everywhere on foot, and died in 672. All told there are thirty-one churches dedicated to Chad in the Midlands and his



*The crypt at Lastingham*

relics are now kept in the Catholic cathedral in Birmingham.

Before catching the train at York for our return journey, we paid a short visit to the Minster reflecting that it was here, so long ago, that Edwin was baptized by St. Paulinus in the little timber oratory built by him for that purpose, later rebuilt in stone by Oswald, and now the vast edifice we see today. We left considering the words with which Basil Hume ended his book:

*We in our day face problems too. Our society is becoming even more post-Christian. We no longer have shared moral values. There is much confusion about the purpose of life. But we can be inspired by the saints of Anglo-Saxon England, and do in*

## THE FRIENDS' GIFT IN USE TODAY

When we last visited Rome we were able to see our gift to the Holy Father in action, the laser instrument, a remarkable piece of technology that can burn off dirt without harming what lies beneath. Recently, this tool has been used at the Lateran Basilica for cleaning marbles and tests have shown that it can be safely used on frescoes as well. This is proving very useful as it replaces the use of solvents that can harm delicate paintings.

During the papacy of Paul III (1534-1549) the south-west wing of the Apostolic Palace became unstable and had to be partly rebuilt. New buildings included the Sala Regia where ambassadors were once received, and the Pauline Chapel - one of the five now reserved for the exclusive use of the pope. The Chapel contains the last frescoes of Michelangelo, the Conversion of St. Paul and the Crucifixion of St. Peter, and these are today being restored with the use of our equipment.



*Michelangelo's fresco of St Peter in the Pauline*

## THE VATICAN'S BUDGET STATEMENT FOR 2006—AGAIN IN THE BLACK

The meeting of the Council of Cardinals for the study of the Economic Affairs of the Holy See on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2006, of which Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor is a member, was chaired by Cardinal Bertone, the Secretary of State, and included the report of budget statement for the Holy See, the Vatican City State and Peter's Pence for 2006.

1. The budget of **the Holy See** showed a small surplus, the first in eight years. Total income - £124.751m. ; total expenses - £126.953m.;surplus - £2.202m. The implementation of a policy of strict control of expenses, including a general decrease in running costs, failed to compensate for the fall in revenues. There were 2671 priests, religious and lay people working for the Roman Curia. In addition the expenses of papal representatives around the world amounted to around £12.7m.

2. The budget of **the Vatican City State** showed a surplus of £14.9m., about £6.3m. less than the previous year. The Government of Vatican City State provides for the administration of the City's territory and the exercise of activities that give the Holy See logistical support.

3. The **Peter's Pence** collection, the fund that supports the Holy Father's charitable works, came to £33.1m. The Holy Father earmarked this especially for the financial support of pastoral projects of Church communities as he sees the need, and to respond speedily to alleviate conditions of extreme poverty and hardship, such as cases of famines and natural disasters.

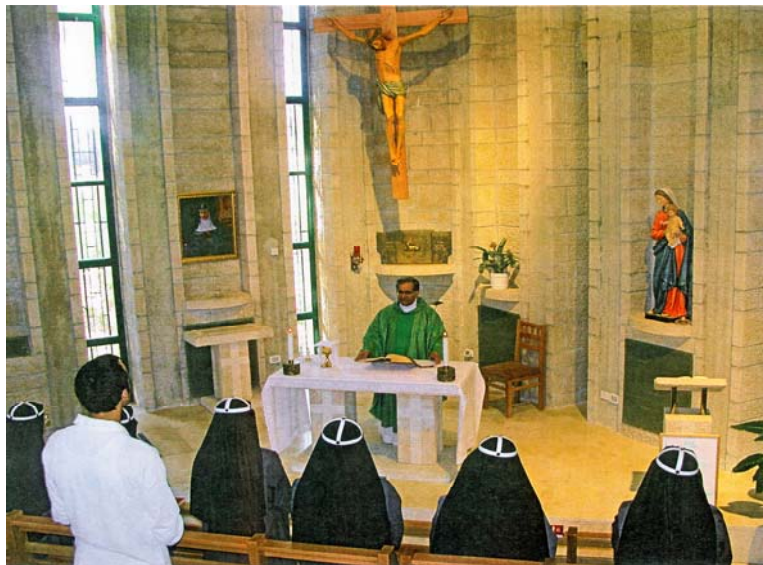
## FRIENDS OF THE HOLY FATHER

### APPEAL—PEACE CENTRE IN JERUSALEM

Pope Benedict has indicated to the Friends of the Holy Father that he would be grateful for some contribution towards the cost of the new Bridgettine Centre for inter-religious dialogue on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. The basic building itself has been given by the Holy See to the Bridgettine order to be a spiritual, ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue centre as well as a centre for charitable work for the very neediest, but it is in

need of restoration and repair, the latest cost estimate for the whole work being just under £1.5 million. This is way and above anything that the Friends are likely to be able to raise by themselves, although we have already sent £42,000 towards the restoration of the Centre's chapel which has already been completed.

*The Chapel on  
the Mount of Olives*



### ST RICHARD REYNOLDS AND HIS CHAPEL IN JEUSALEM

The new Chapel in the Bridgettine Centre in Jerusalem is dedicated to one of the English proto-martyrs of the Reformation, Saint Richard Reynolds, a Bridgettine priest of Syon Abbey at Isleworth, Middx. who suffered the barbaric death on 4<sup>th</sup> May, 1535 of hanging, drawing and quartering at Tyburn in London, the penalty that had been laid down by law for Catholic priests. He was accompanied to the gallows by three Carthusian priests: St. John Houghton, prior of the Carthusian monastery or "Charterhouse" at Gray's Inn in London; St. Robert Lawrence, prior the Carthusian abbey of Beauvale, Notts. and St. Augustine Webster, prior of the monastery of Axholm, Lincs.

In the year 1533 Henry VIII, King of England, put away his lawful wife, Catherine of Aragon, and married Ann Boleyn. Shortly after, two Acts were passed by Parliament: the **Act of Succession** made it a capital offence to deny the validity of the King's marriage with Ann Boleyn; the **Act of Supremacy** made it high treason to



*Saint Richard Reynolds*

refuse to acknowledge the King as 'the only Supreme Head on earth of the Church in England.' Most of the martyrs in Henry's time suffered for refusing to accept these two Acts.

They were among the few who saw clearly the implications of Henry VIII's policy and were prepared to sacrifice their lives for the principle of church unity in opposition to the autocratic rule of the king.

When the Act of Supremacy was declared, Lawrence and Webster came to London to confer with Prior Houghton at the Charterhouse. The three approached Thomas Cromwell in an attempt to obtain an oath of supremacy which would be acceptable in conscience to their communities, but were thrown into the Tower.

St. Richard Reynolds was considered to be one of the most learned monks in England at that time. Born in 1487 at Pinhoe in Devon, he went up to Cambridge where the University in the sixteenth century was inspired by its Chancellor, St. John Fisher. Richard Reynolds took his BA there in 1506 and MA in 1509. The following year he became a fellow on Corpus Christi College and began his post-graduate studies in Theology, gaining his BD in 1513. He is said to have been the only English monk of his day well versed in the three principal languages – Latin, Greek and Hebrew.

Syon Abbey was founded in 1415 at Isleworth, Middlesex, by King Henry V who that year had won the Battle

of Agincourt. Syon was the only house of the Bridgettine Order to be established in England. The Order itself, whose official title was the Order of St. Saviour, had been founded by St. Bridget of Sweden during the previous century to off-set the declining zeal of the older orders.

Syon Abbey was a double order, each monastery consisting of a convent of sixty nuns strictly enclosed, and a separate enclosure of thirteen brethren and eight lay brothers. As an enclosed order the Bridgettines devoted themselves to a life of austerity and prayer though such was the fervour of their lives and the quality of the recruits that they made a tremendous impact on the spiritual life of many countries in Northern Europe during the century before the Reformation.

In November 1534 St Thomas More and John Fisher had already been imprisoned for refusing the

oath. The king's Secretary, Thomas Cromwell, was ready to strike at the main strongpoints of opposition, especially the Carthusians and the Bridgettines. Sometime before April 20<sup>th</sup> 1535 Richard Reynolds was arrested and lodged in the Tower of London with John Houghton, Robert Lawrence and Augustine Webster. A trial followed. The jury was told by Cromwell that failure to condemn the accused would result in the death of the jury itself.

The prisoners were taken back to the Tower whilst the jury discussed their verdict which would require careful consideration as this was a new and difficult type of case. The issue could not have been the facts of the case but the new law of treason and the way in which it was interpreted. Cromwell, suspecting that they had arrived at a verdict of "not guilty," sent a messenger in the evening to enquire as to the reason for the delay. The jurors replied that they dare not condemn such holy men as criminals, nor had they found them in any way guilty. The king's secretary immediately sent a further message that if they did not bring in the verdict expected the jurors themselves would be put to death. When this proved to no avail Cromwell went in person to utter further threats. In the end the jury pronounced the accused guilty but afterwards they were ashamed to show their faces in London.

On Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> April the prisoners were again brought to the bar. When asked why he persisted in his opinion Richard Reynolds replied: *I had indeed determined, in imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ when He was before the court of Herod, to return no answer; but since you press me, I say that our belief is of greater weight and has far more abundant testimony in its behalf than yours. For instead of the few whom you bring forward out of the Parliament of this kingdom, I have on my side the entire Christian world except those of this kingdom; nay, I do not say all of this kingdom, for only the lesser part is with you. And were even the greater part of the kingdom to declare against me, it would not be because they so believe, but only by outward feigning of it, for fear of loss of dignity and honour and for the hope of winning royal favour.*

They were condemned to death and were dragged on hurdles, still in their monastic habits, to Tyburn for execution. St. Thomas More, also a prisoner in the Tower, witnessed their departure and remarked to his daughter, then visiting him: *Lo, dost thou not see, Meg, that these blessed fathers are now cheerfully going to their deaths as bridegrooms to marriage ?.*

St. Richard died like the Carthusians with heroic fortitude. In equanimity, in strength of character and constancy he takes rank with More and Fisher among the noblest of the age. The custom was to fix the heads and quarters of executed criminals in prominent places as a warning to others. Among the few relics of old Syon still in possession of the present community is the capital of a pillar of 15<sup>th</sup> century carved stone, part of the old Abbey's gateway to which some of the martyr's mangled remains hung.

Material for this article kindly given by Tyburn Convent, London



*A section of the gateway at Syon Abbey, Isleworth, which bore part of St Richard's body after his execution*

## FOR YOUR DIARY

### **Annual General Meeting - 2008.**

This will take place on **Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2007**. It will follow the Mass celebrated at 5.30pm in Westminster Cathedral by Bishop Peter Doyle of Northampton who will then preside at the Meeting.

### **Pilgrimage 2008.**

This will take place from **11<sup>th</sup> September to the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008**.

Centred on Vienna and Munich we will have a varied and interesting programme that includes celebrating the 325<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Vienna on 12 September 1883, when the Christian army led by the valiant King Jan Sobieski of Poland defeated the might of the Ottoman Empire that was besieging the city and thereby thwarting their plan to bring the whole of Europe under the Crescent banner; to venerate shrines of some English Apostles of Germany, and a visit to Pope Benedict's birthplace at Marktl am Inn in Bavaria. For further information please write to: Monsignor Ralph Brown, Flat 3, 8 Morpeth Terrace, London, SW1P 1EQ.

## A HAPPY AND HOLY CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

### **FRIENDS OF THE HOLY FATHER**

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### **Subscriptions**

A subscription renewal notice is offered to those who do not renew by Banker's Order. Please act on it now. If you would like to renew by Banker's Order in future, please ask for a form. We would also be very grateful if taxpayers could complete a Gift Aid Form if you have not already done so.

Please remember that leaving a **legacy** to the FHF is a way of continuing your support for the Holy Father well into the future. We are a national charity (No. 280489) so your bequest is exempt from inheritance tax. It can be included in a new will or added in a codicil to your existing will.