

Holiness



There is a small group of islands situated in the North Sea off the coast of Northumberland. At night the powerful beam from the Longstone Light sweeps the surrounding sea, momentarily brightening the mainland some miles away. During the day, as the weather permits, boats cruise in and out of Seahouses harbour taking visitors on trips to Inner Farne or Staple Island.

Thousands of grey seals bask on the islands at low water or swim in the cold waves. Protected from many of their predators seabirds find the islands a sanctuary and nest there in profusion. There are guillemots, razorbills, eiderducks, terns, shags and cormorants.

One of these islands is especially dear to Christians. St Cuthbert who was Prior of the monastery on Lindisfarne and in his many missionary journeys in ancient Northumbria was greatly loved, withdrew to Inner Farne in 676 AD to be alone with God. It was a wild, forsaken island. There he met with his beloved God.



His secluded life did not last. Soon the coracles were bobbing across the sea carrying those in need of prayer, healing, advice or even to catch a glimpse of their beloved saint. The cross truly came to Cuthbert when he was elected Bishop of Lindisfarne. Suspecting reluctance on his part the King journeyed to Inner Farne accompanied by church dignitaries to persuade him to accept this office. In humility and obedience but with a heavy heart Cuthbert accepted his new role. He travelled extensively encouraging the church, healing the sick, preaching the gospel. Always winsome and compassionate, the crowds flocked to him. Only two years later worn out by his labours, he sensed that he had a fatal illness and returned to Inner Farne. Three months later he died there in the arms of his brothers from Lindisfarne.

Genuine holiness is always winsome and attractive. We are called to be holy. How? It is all there in the life of Cuthbert – prayer, humility, accepting the will of God and suffering. Holiness is the fruit of Christ dwelling in us.