Sermon slot – July 31st – Vision and faith

**Lindisfarne Priory – Holy Island,** Northumberland

(Holy Island)

635 FOUNDATION

Lindisfarne is intimately connected with the history of Christianity in Britain.   
**The Vision:**

In 635 the Northumbrian king, Oswald (reigned 634–42), summoned an Irish monk named Aidan from Iona – the island-monastery off the south-west coast of what is now Scotland – to be bishop of his kingdom. Oswald granted Aidan and his companions the small tidal island of Lindisfarne on which to found a monastery.

It marks the establishment of Christianity in the northeast of England and is still a centre of pilgrimage today.

Sometime in the 670s a monk named Cuthbert joined the monastery at Lindisfarne. He eventually became Lindisfarne’s greatest monk-bishop, and the most important saint in northern England in the Middle Ages.

Cuthbert died on 20 March 687 and was buried in a stone coffin inside the main church on Lindisfarne. Eleven years later the monks opened his tomb. To their delight they discovered that Cuthbert’s body had not decayed, but was ‘incorrupt’ – a sure sign, they argued, of his purity and saintliness.[[1]](https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/link/2aea6eafe5114b079e6f66ac49dc76e1.aspx#A1) His remains were elevated to a coffin-shrine at ground level, and this marked the beginnings of the cult of St Cuthbert, which was to alter the course of Lindisfarne’s history.

**The faith: (Lindisfarne gospels – extract from Matthew)**

Miracles were soon reported at St Cuthbert’s shrine and Lindisfarne was quickly established as the major pilgrimage centre in Northumbria. The cult of St Cuthbert consolidated the monastery’s reputation as a centre of Christian learning. One of the results was the production in about 710–25 of the masterpiece of early medieval art known today as the [Lindisfarne Gospels](http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/sacredtexts/lindisfarne.html).[[2]](https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/link/2aea6eafe5114b079e6f66ac49dc76e1.aspx#A2)

At some point in the early 8th century the illuminated manuscript known as the [Lindisfarne Gospels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lindisfarne_Gospels), an illustrated [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin) copy of the [Gospels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospels) of [Matthew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Matthew), [Mark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mark), [Luke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Luke) and [John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_John), was made, probably at Lindisfarne. The artist was possibly [Eadfrith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eadfrith_of_Lindisfarne" \o "Eadfrith of Lindisfarne), who later became Bishop of Lindisfarne. It is also speculated that a team of illuminators and calligraphers (monks of [Lindisfarne Priory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lindisfarne_Priory)) worked on the text, but if so, their identities are unknown. Some time in the second half of the 10th century, a monk named Aldred added an [Anglo-Saxon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Saxon_language) ([Old English](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_English_language)) gloss to the Latin text, producing the earliest surviving Old English copies of the [Gospels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospels).

The book, weighing about 8.7kg, is a spectacular example of Insular or Hiberno-Saxon art—works produced in the British Isles between 500–900 C.E., a time of devastating invasions and political upheavals. Monks read from it during rituals at their Lindisfarne Priory on Holy Island, a Christian community that safeguarded the shrine of St Cuthbert, a bishop who died in 687 and whose relics were thought to have curative and miracle-working powers.

(St Mary the Virgin – exterior)

On 8 June 793 Lindisfarne suffered a devastating raid by Viking pirates – their first significant attack in western Europe. The monks were scattered, taking Cuthbert’s remains with them. Some returned in the 11th Century, and the church of St Mary the Virgin, which was built by about 1150, contained a cenotaph (an empty tomb) marking the spot where, according to tradition, Cuthbert’s body had been buried. Although his relics were by then in Durham, the place of his primary shrine on Lindisfarne was still a sacred spot which attracted pilgrims.

(St Mary the Virgin – interior)

When the abbey was rebuilt by the Normans, the site was moved. The site of the original priory church was redeveloped in stone as the parish church. As such it is now the oldest building on the island still with a roof on. Remains of the [Saxon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saxons) church exist as the chancel wall and arch.

After the [Viking invasions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viking_expansion) and the [Norman conquest of England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_conquest_of_England), a [priory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priory) was re-established. A small castle was built on the island in 1550.

It is accessible at low tide by a modern causeway and an ancient [pilgrims' path](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pilgrimage) that run over sand and [mudflats](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mudflat) and which are covered with water at high tide. Lindisfarne is surrounded by the 8,750-acre (3,540-hectare) [Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lindisfarne_National_Nature_Reserve), which protects the island's sand dunes and the adjacent intertidal habitats. As of 27 March 2011, the island had a population of 180.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lindisfarne#cite_note-FOOTNOTEOffice_for_National_Statistics2013-23)

The causeway is generally open from about three hours after high tide until two hours before the next high tide, but the period of closure may be extended during stormy weather. Tide tables giving the safe crossing periods are published by [Northumberland County Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northumberland_County_Council).[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lindisfarne#cite_note-FOOTNOTEHoly_Island_webmaster2019-25)

Despite these warnings, about one vehicle each month is stranded on the causeway, requiring rescue by [HM Coastguard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HM_Coastguard) and/or [Seahouses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seahouses) [RNLI](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_National_Lifeboat_Institution) lifeboat.

The discovery of a cemetery led to finding commemorative markers "unique to the 8th and 9th centuries". The group also found evidence of an early medieval building, "which seems to have been constructed on top of an even earlier industrial oven" which was used to make copper or glass.[[68]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lindisfarne#cite_note-71)

. A Norman [apse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apse) (subsequently replaced in the 13th century) led eastwards from the chancel. The nave was extended in the 12th century with a northern arcade, and in the following century with a southern arcade.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)]

After the [Reformation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Reformation) the church slipped into disrepair until the restoration of 1860. The church is built of coloured sandstone which has had the [Victorian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian_era) plaster removed from it. The north aisle is known as the "fishermen's aisle" and houses the altar of St. Peter. The south aisle used to hold the altar of St. Margaret of Scotland, but now houses the organ.[[69]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lindisfarne#cite_note-FOOTNOTEBrother_Damian_SSF2009-72)

Lindisfarne Castle was built in 1550, around the time that Lindisfarne Priory went out of use, and stones from the priory were used as building material. It is very small by the usual standards, and was more of a fort. The castle sits on the highest point of the island, a [whinstone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whinstone) hill called Beblowe.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)]

After Henry VIII suppressed the priory, his troops used the remains as a naval store. In 1542 Henry VIII ordered the [Earl of Rutland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Manners,_1st_Earl_of_Rutland) to fortify the site against possible Scottish invasion.

**Our Lady of the Rocks,** Perast, Montenegro

**(Our Lady of the Rock)**  
**The Vision:**

Our Lady of the Rocks is an artificial island created in XV century. According to legend, on 22nd July 1452, two brothers from Perast, both fishermen, found an icon of the Virgin with Christ on the sea-cliff. They brought it home but the next morning it was gone. It appeared at the same sea-cliff, so the two brothers took it home one more time. The same thing happened - the icon disappeared again and reappeared on the sea-cliff.

They understood this as the Virgin's wish to stay there forever. They vowed to build a church dedicated to this icon of the Virgin, the patron saint of seafarers and fishermen.

**The faith:**

Of course, there wasn't enough rock to build a church on at the time. So they started to drop boatloads of rocks and scuttle old boats around the spot. Other sailors also began to drop rocks on the spot as they headed out to sea, in hopes of being protected while they were away, and on their way back as thanks for safe return. By 1484, 32 years after they found the icon, there was an island with a chapel on it.

In the centre of the island they built a little chapel. For centuries, in a traditional event called Fasinada, held every year on 22nd July, they were dropping stones and over time the surface of the island has grown. Fasinada is still held annually. People in a procession of boats drop the stones at the site.

**(Fasinada)**

**(video clip)**

**(Marble altar)**

Inside the church is a marble altar built in 1796 by Antonio Kapelano, a sculptor from Genova. On the altar there is the icon of the Lady of the Rocks, painted by the famous painter Lovro Dobričević in the middle of the XV century.

**La Sagrada Familia – basilica** Barcelona, Spain

**(La Sagrada Familia)**

The most extraordinary, even overwhelming, church I have ever been in. When construction of the Sagrada Família is completed, the basilica will be the largest church building in the world.

**Vision:**

Antoni Gaudi – architect, wanted to build a monumental church – for the people – by the people. Began in 1882, and worked on it until his death in 1928. Hoped to be finished by 2026, but unlikely.

**(Video)**

**Three holy places, in three different times of history, built as visions, sustained by faith,**

Construction of this holy church started on 19 March 1882. Initially it was based on the plans by architect Francisco de Paula del Villar, but in 1883, architect **Antoni Gaudí**was given the task to continue construction of the Sagrada Família. After Gaudi received an anonymous donation, he decided to replace the original Gothic Revival design with a more modern and innovative temple design. The only time construction was halted for a few years was during the Spanish Civil War. Until his death in 1926, Gaudi worked on the temple, and several architects have succeeded him since.

The speed at which the building of the Sagrada Família progresses depends largely on the amount of gifts donated by visitors. Work on the basilica has now been going on for so long, that even finished parts of the Sagrada are starting to show wear and have to be renovated during your visit. That's not uncommon for churches this size. Although the Sagrada Família is not yet completed, Gaudi's church was consecrated already on 7 November 2010 by Pope Benedictus XVI.

#### Inside the Holy Family church

The interior of the temple is very impressive. The unique columns of the church are like trees and branches that support the roof of the temple; the structure of the branches is such that it perfectly supports the weight of the ceiling and also produces the best possible distribution of light and sound. The stained-glass windows add a magical effect of colour and light and create a unique sense of tranquillity in the [Sagrada Família](https://go2barcelona.de/sagrada-familia.html) church.