

SACRED PLACES, SACRED PEOPLE

Some years ago I wrote a new guide book for Durham Cathedral. I began, as deans do, by offering a word of welcome to it, saying that there were three sites in north-east England that were commonly regarded as 'iconic' of the region: Hadrian's Wall, the Angel of the North, and Durham Cathedral. Later, I was drawn into a long conversation with a visitor from eastern Europe who had taken exception to what I had written. He said that I was using the word 'iconic' in a lazy way that obscured how very different these three places were and did not do justice to the true meaning of 'icon'. What made the Cathedral 'iconic' was not simply its unforgettable visible image, but the indissoluble association between the place and its people over a thousand years. What gave the Cathedral its rich 'texture', he thought, was not its architecture and history alone, what we might call the 'heritage', but specifically the memory and lived experience of a common life focused on a particular place over many centuries, and continuing in the present day. Hadrian's Wall only had this connection to a human community in an attenuated way, and for a far shorter period of time; while he doubted whether the Angel of the North was 'iconic' at all other than as an easily recognised profile on the skyline, an 'icon' only in the modern and as he thought, debased, sense that is familiar to us as IT-speak.

He was I think making two points in this thought-provoking exchange. The first was that what makes something 'iconic' in this deeper sense is not simply that it symbolises something, nor even that enough people assign value to it to get it included in some canon of defining images. An iconic place has to do 'work', not in the crudely functional sense that it necessarily serves a functional purpose, but that it is profoundly connected to a community, 'does' something for it and invites, indeed requires, that community to do things for it. The second was that an icon, as we know, opens doors, discloses meanings beyond itself, draws us into another dimension of experience. An icon is always 'charged' with significance which is why it is inseparable from the emotional, spiritual and aspirational investment in it on the part of human beings. This is how art and heritage take on 'texture'.

I am still not sure whether I agree with my conversation partner about the north-east's iconic sites, or whether I conclude that in fact his argument proves more than he intended, for it is indisputable that for the people of this region, these three places represent something more than mere branding, and more than a simply aesthetic appeal to the senses. There are many people in the north-east who do not like Anthony Gormley's sculpture, and who regard it as a piece of rather brutal temporary art shorn of any truly symbolic meaning, and beset by all the uncertainties and lack of conviction that characterises our age with its ambivalence about strong religious or cultural statements. But even they don't disparage the use of the word 'iconic' to describe the way it has undeniably captured the imagination of the north-east. I doubt whether Hadrian's extraordinary wall is conventionally

‘beautiful’; yet there is something haunting about its relationship to the lowering skies and wide lonely landscapes of Northumberland that seems to make it an eloquent image for this part of England. There are even a few who do not greatly care for Durham Cathedral, who find the building dark, intimidating and oppressive; yet precisely because of this admit that it captures the tough astringency of north-east England.

I shall leave you to ponder the significance of sacred ‘place’ in the light of yesterday’s lecture, and as you visit the Angel of the North later today. But where my critic was undoubtedly right about ‘texture’ was in something that was implied rather than stated in his comments about how an icon exists only in relation to a community. What was implied was to do with the *particular* people who are remembered at certain places. Part of the value a community ascribes to an iconic place is its association with memory, not only specific events that constitute a story but the people who are its central protagonists. In narrative terms, this is how particular sites have meaning conferred on them, because of the complex nexus of *place, people and event*. In this place, something significant has happened to certain people. When that story intersects and resonates with the self-understanding of a community or an individual, its ‘place’ becomes charged with significance, iconic in a more focused sense than the loose way I used it as part of the Durham Cathedral promotional-speak. Sometimes it is a public significance for a society or nation, like the Cenotaph. Sometimes it holds private significance for families and a few individuals, like a roadside shrine where flowers are tied to a post in memory of a loved one killed in a road accident. Sometimes it carries religious significance, sometimes not. But a site that is in any way truly iconic or numinous, capable of inhabiting the landscape of the mind, and evoking in the widest sense a spiritual response, will always, I think, have a texture that is layered by a sense of place, the memory of particular people, and an event or events in the distant or more recent past that live on in the present.

Faith communities have always understood this. In the history of religions, the ‘idea of the holy’ is not usually of some disembodied presence, rather it is an experience of the divine, *mysterium tremens et fascinans*, that is concretely located in particular places, people and events. Pilgrimage in the world’s religions is the universal human way of acknowledging the importance of places where certain significant things happened to certain significant people. In the Old Testament, we could cite many examples, such as the shrine at Bethel that was associated with the patriarch Jacob because of his dream of the ladder to heaven and the altar he built there; or Solomon’s temple at Jerusalem whose altar of burnt offering was situated at the very place where David had bought a threshing floor in order to build an altar to thank God for the cessation of a plague.

Of course, it’s important to recognise that the sacredness of a site may not always follow the events and people it claims to commemorate. Religious sites are

frequently far more ancient than the stories that are told about them; a story such as Jacob's vision may be 'aetiological' in giving legitimacy to a shrine that had been known from prehistory but whose meaning had been forgotten, or where a new meaning consistent with Israel's traditions was required, for to associate a place with the father of the twelve tribes of Israel was to give it great potency. The same is true of the temple. We know that David did not himself contribute to the building of the temple. So a story linking it to the legendary king would confer an unanswerable legitimacy on it, a divine stamp of approval in the face of those who questioned the temple project as alien to the desert faith of Yahweh.

Medieval pilgrim churches always have this layering of place, people and event. You only have to think of the three great pilgrim destinations of medieval Europe, Jerusalem, Rome and Santiago da Compostela to realise this. But I'd like to concentrate on north-east England where we see this in abundance; for this region is the richest in England for its concentration of pilgrimage sites related to the origins of Christianity in Saxon times.

Let me start with Durham. The Cathedral, and therefore the city, only exists because of the memory of one man and the community who revered him. Cuthbert's body was brought to Durham by the community that bore his name in 995 after more than a century of wandering around the north of England and in an important sense defining a 'sacred geography' that roughly approximates to north-east England. Holy sense of 'place' was built into the journey of Cuthbert's relics from the first. At every place where the coffin rested, a church was erected and the memory of Cuthbert enshrined into the self-understanding of a locality: places such as Norham on the Tweed, and Chester-le-Street, the mother church of the Durham Palatinate. Such churches were always dedicated to St Cuthbert, or to Our Lady and St Cuthbert, as indeed was our Cathedral (which, after a lapse of over 450 years following the Reformation, now has St Cuthbert restored to its legal title alongside Christ and Blessed Mary the Virgin.

So the 'texture' of Durham, its iconic significance, its sanctity if you like is inseparable from the saint whose shrine it was from the very beginning. The shrine legitimises sacred place. And inevitably, the sacred attracts the sacred. St Oswald's head had already been interred with the Cuthbert relics as the royal patron of the Northumbrian mission (and perhaps because the presence of a martyr's relics added potency to those of Cuthbert). Add to this, as part of the same symbol-system, the Lindisfarne Gospels, written 'in honour of God and St Cuthbert' early in the 8th century perhaps a decade and a half after his death, and always intended to be inseparable from his relics. One day, perhaps, they will be reunited.

But the monks of Durham were greedy for more relics, I don't say that they did not covet sanctity; but more relics meant more pilgrims and more pilgrims meant more gifts and endowments including valuable estates. In the middle ages, one way

of strengthening the relationship with sacred history was the practice of *furta sacra*, the sacred theft of relics from other shrines. 'Professional traffickers in holiness' travelled around snatching and selling relics of the saints. Bishop Hugh of Lincoln was an ardent practitioner. He was once allowed to handle the arm of Mary Magdalene at a rival shrine, whereupon he surreptitiously bit off a finger and took it back to Lincoln. The monks of Durham were not above this practice. They insinuated one of their number here at Jarrow; and when that monk had gained sufficient trust, he stole the relics of Bede and brought them back to Durham to form a second shrine alongside Cuthbert. That was in 1022. Bede's remains have been there ever since, an additional focus of spiritual presence in a church already well endowed with saints and the source of a millennium of irritation on the part of Jarrow people towards Durham.

It is an important story to tell here in Jarrow, because it shows how strongly the association of holy place and holy people was felt in the middle ages, and is still felt today. But the story of the theft of Bede's relics opens up another aspect of the relationship of sacred people to sacred place. St Paul's Jarrow, like St Peter's Monkwearmouth are both moving testaments to the faith of the Saxon era, so vibrant and colourful, so intensely focused on the goal of human sanctity and on the reconciliation of earth to heaven. (If you want to see an entire surviving church from the era of Bede, you must go to Escomb in the south of the county, a pure Saxon building of consummate beauty that hints at what these two churches of the double monastery might once have looked like.)

My point is that after 1022, this church became a pilgrim's paradox: a saint's shrine without the saint's relics. It became an empty place, shorn of the very thing that gave it meaning. And yet the meaning lived on, perhaps tenuously for many centuries, but then strongly revived in the 18th and 19th centuries with the rise of romanticism and its passion for antiquity. Where Bede had lived and worked and died, there the memory was once again revered. That there were no physical remains left to honour made no difference. It still doesn't. Mention 'Bede' in the north-east, and the reply you will get will be 'Jarrow', not Durham. You will hear about Bede's World, a successful and enjoyable rehabilitation of his memory in the place he knew and loved. You may know that the two Bede sites of Wearmouth and Jarrow are in contention as a candidate for UNESCO world heritage status in 2010, not so much because these places are visually beautiful but because of the spiritual, cultural and intellectual 'heritage' the legacy of Bede represents.

(Interestingly, the promotional literature which lucidly puts the case for Bede as worthy of world heritage recognition contains not a single reference to the fact that his remains are buried at Durham not 20 miles away.)

The intriguing implication of this is that Wearmouth-Jarrow are in effect saying of Durham, 'they may have the body of Bede, but we have his spirit'. Something

similar is said on Lindisfarne about Cuthbert. I am not going to say that they are altogether right, but neither are they wholly wrong. My point is that the association of holy place and holy people can and does transcend physical remains. A place can become a shrine and attract pilgrims for its holy (or heroic) memories and resonances. And this is, in fact, how most of our 'shrines' in the north-east are. Not only Lindisfarne and the Inner Farne of Aidan and Cuthbert, Wearmouth and Jarrow of Benedict Biscop and Bede, but Bamburgh where Aidan died, Hartlepool where Hild ruled a double monastery, Coldingham where Aebba presided over a similar community, Hexham where Wilfrid was bishop, Finchale where Godric lived as a hermit, and many other sites across County Durham and Northumberland where memory has sanctified place. In all these places, memory does not need the support of physical remains. The nexus of place, people and event is powerful enough on its own.

The implications of this for Durham are perhaps not comfortable. For uniquely among the places I have mentioned, Durham has no intrinsic relation with any of the saints whose relics it houses. Cuthbert presumably did not visit the obscure peninsula hilltop site of Dunholm far away from any major centre of population and from his own native Farne. Bede, who was given to this joint monastery as a child, probably never left it apart from two occasions. So Durham is the paradox of a holy place whose sanctity has nothing to do with what is indigenous to the place itself. It's a cuckoo in the nest, originating out of the historical accident that this was where the community of St Cuthbert chose to inter their saint and erect his shrine. This is why the 12th century chronicler Symeon of Durham, who probably came to England with the founder of the new Cathedral William of St Calais and who therefore had an interest in promoting the project of the Normans, goes to such great lengths in his *Libellus* or 'little book on the origins of the Cathedral to legitimate the shrine, telling stories of how providence had guided the community to that spot, how the coffin refused to be carried any further because the saint had decided that his resting place should be at Durham.

This story was important and influential in two ways. First, it bolstered the fortunes of the Cathedral Priory at a time when the murder of Thomas Becket was placing the rival shrine at Canterbury ahead of Durham in the pilgrimage stakes. But second, and importantly, it supported the temporal power of the prince bishops whose legitimacy as rulers of a palatinate kingdom within a kingdom depended on the patronage and good will of the local saint. We can see something similar in the legend of how the relics of St James the Great came to be discovered in 'the field of the star', Compostela, thus legitimating the great shrine and pilgrim destination that place was becoming, and at the same time acting as the patron saint of the long *Reconquista* of Spain, the reclamation for Christendom of the Iberian peninsula from Islamic domination. If you know the Pilgrim Road, you will be familiar with many images of St James as the *Matamoros*, the slayer of the Moors, hardly a comfortable depiction of a Christian saint for our own age, but an

eloquent reminder of how both sacred people and sacred places become appropriated to the social and political causes of the day.

Having said something about the relationship of sacred people to sacred place and sacred event, let me devote the rest of this lecture to looking more specifically at six of the north-east's most important saints from the Saxon period and the places with which they are associated. Simply to list these six names is to remind ourselves what an extraordinary era the 7th and early 8th century was, from the baptism of Edwin in 627 to the death of Bede in 735. (Let me say, while I am about it, that I avoid the use of the word 'Celtic' to describe the saints of that century. It is a slippery word that in popular spirituality tends to mean uncial script, intertwined decoration and fancy knotwork, images of golden sunsets and all pleasantly scented like a National Trust shop. I joke but as a matter of accuracy, only one of them was of Irish origin. The others were all Saxon Northumbrians, strongly influenced by the Irish traditions of Lindisfarne but in no way Celts themselves, least of all after the Synod of Whitby in 664 when the Saxon church adopted Roman ways two decades before Cuthbert became bishop and before Bede was even born.) And while it is inevitably simplistic, I am going to associate with these saints and 'their' places a quality that for me identifies each of them as a distinctive, iconic figure who occupies a unique place in the landscape of the mind.

Oswald, king and saint, is in many ways the father of the Christian mission in Northumbria, and through it to much of England. He is the only one of the six to have become a martyr. He became a Christian on Iona, returning to Northumbria to do battle with the pagan British king Cadwalla. The story is told of how he set up a wooden cross at Heavenfield in the Tyne Valley and gathered his army to pray for victory. The defeat of Cadwalla was a turning point in the Christianisation of the kingdom, and led to his sending to Iona for a bishop who would preach the gospel to Northumbria. This is what brought Aidan to England. However in 642 he lost his life in battle against the Mercian king Penda, a death that was quickly construed as a life offered for the cause of Christ against paganism. Penda dismembered his body, and this accounts for the fact that his relics are honoured in many different places. His head was buried with Cuthbert's remains on Lindisfarne and found its way to Durham: as is common in the Cuthbert iconography, there is a medieval statue of Cuthbert in the shrine there, holding Oswald's head. We can associate the lonely site at *Heavenfield* with him; but perhaps more eloquently, the castle at *Bamburgh*, where Oswald established his royal court, not as Northumbria's first Christian king (that honour belongs to Edwin), but as the monarch who decisively established Christianity in the kingdom and thus gave it its character. In this, he is an image of the Christian leader in public life, for whom politics and faith, for all their ambiguous alchemy, belonged inextricably to a single baptismal vocation.

I see *Aidan* as the *missioner*. He is inevitably associated with the place where he founded a *monasterium*, *the Holy Island of Lindisfarne*. It is one of the most numinous, or as they say up here, ‘thinnest’ places in England. Of Aidan’s monastery nothing remains, only the memory; but what a memory it is! I have called Aidan a symbol of mission, for as I have said he was brought from Iona by Oswald not as his personal chaplain, but specifically to convert the Northumbrians to Christianity. The choice of Lindisfarne as the base of the Northumbrian mission is very significant. Aidan seems to have looked for a site where his monks could live in community according to their rule following his native Irish traditions, from where he and others could travel across the kingdom preaching the gospel. The ‘semi-detached’ nature of the Island was ideal: it is connected yet not-connected to the mainland, a place with porous boundaries where holiness could be nurtured as the prerequisite for mission. But there is another aspect to the island’s physical location. This is that it is within direct sight of Oswald’s royal palace at Bamburgh, as if to say, not only was the king patron of the mission, but the politics of the court were accountable to the High King, God himself, whom the island community existed to proclaim. This pattern of holy place juxtaposed to secular power is common in medieval sites: Durham is a good example of this. The message is: mission is to the institutions of a society as well as to its individual members. All of human life is subject to the kingship of God, and mission is to proclaim that fact.

I propose *Hild* as the *reconciler*. She was related to the Northumbrian royal family and was one of the first to become a Christian alongside the first Christian king of Northumbria, Edwin. Aidan established her in a community somewhere between the Wear and the Tyne, but she soon afterwards became Abbess of the convent at Hartlepool. In 657 she founded the double monastery at Whitby where the famous Synod was held in 664. That she hosted it is important, together with her loyalty to its outcome in favour of Roman customs in the calculation of the date of Easter and the design of the monastic tonsure. As an heir of Aidan, this will not have been easy; yet it is clear that she worked tirelessly for the unity of the church in Northumbria, gaining much influence and authority among both the nation’s leaders and the common people who often resorted to her for advice. A feminist reading of her life would emphasise the respect in which able women could be held in Saxon times: she was unusual, but as we can see from the life of Aebbe, prioress of Coldingham, by no means unique. Perhaps it is not fortuitous that it was a woman who, in both physical and metaphorical ways, ‘created space’ for a contentious, difficult debate to take place and for an outcome to be reached that did not fracture the church. This reconciling instinct may perhaps be a particular gift of women in leadership. Her place in north-east England is of course the headland of *Hartlepool*, another of the region’s numinous places, where the great Early English church of St Hilda was built near to the site of her monastery.

Cuthbert is the *ascetic* in this sextet. He stands out not because the others did not also practise *askesis* or 'spiritual training': rather, it is the lengths to which he took it. He is the one saint of this period who can truly be called eremitical, for the vocation to live as a hermit never faltered, even in the midst of a life fully taken up with the evangelistic, pastoral and organisational duties of a bishop. To me he is always Cuthbert of *Farne*, for it was here in the harsh, lonely environment of a rocky island set in a grey hostile sea that he truly found his home. We misconstrue Cuthbert if we see this as the introvert's love of solitude, the quest for a peaceful retreat away from the demands of a busy life. The *Farne* belongs to the same world as his well-documented habit of spending hours standing in the sea overnight as the tide retreated and advanced again saying prayers and reciting psalms. It was a determined battle against the forces of evil in the world and in himself. His extreme spiritual discipline is familiar to us from Irish monks such as Columba and Columbanus, and they seem to owe it to the example of Anthony of Egypt and the desert fathers for whom refuge in the fierce wild places on the margins of human existence was to find God and do battle with demons. The paradox of this man of holy simplicity is that he should end up buried beneath Europe's greatest Romanesque building, built as his shrine, yet at the same time so palpably a monument to human power and achievement. To me the simplicity of his shrine at *Durham* plays an important role in acting as the Cathedral's conscience, a reminder that the ascetic journey towards holiness, rather than the seductions of grandeur, is the vocation of all the baptised.

The least well-known member of this canon of Saxon saints is *Benedict Biscop*, the first abbot of Wearmouth and then of Jarrow. He was the most travelled of the northern saints, making no less than six visits to Rome. He returned from one of these bringing him among many treasures for his famous library here and at Wearmouth; bringing too a new Archbishop of Canterbury, Theodore. He was an energetic church builder, bringing continental stonemasons with him to England whose achievement, in the pre-Norman Romanesque style, we see in the wonderful Saxon remains here at Jarrow and at St Peter's Bishopwearmouth. Among the craftsmen he introduced were the first stained-glass makers, an art for which Sunderland can claim to have pioneered in England, a skill which is perpetuated today in the National Glass Centre on Wearside. But it is for his *cosmopolitanism* that I want to celebrate Benedict Biscop. His long, arduous journeys are a timely reminder that far from being isolated from European civilisation and culture off the north-west corner of the mainland, his Christianity was intricately connected to the continental church. So he reminds us that the local church is always a part of a greater whole: this is the meaning of Catholicism. As to the place with which I identify him, it must be *Sunderland* and specifically *Bishopwearmouth*. A few years ago I was preaching at a civic service at Sunderland Minster. The civic leadership, celebrating their new and much coveted city status, had wanted to make Bede the patron saint of Sunderland. I replied that this would be contested by both Jarrow and Durham whose claims seemed stronger. I asked them to think about Benedict

Biscop instead, for some of the reasons I have outlined. I am glad to say that they have officially adopted him.

My final saint is of course *Bede*, and his place here at *Jarrow*. This is not to undermine the significance of his shrine at Durham, simply to acknowledge that it was here in the lands between the Wear and the Tyne that Bede was given as a child to Biscop's double monastery, and where he spent the rest of his life, making as far as we know only two journeys outside the enclosure. Bede is my undoubted symbol of Christian scholarship and learning, or as I prefer to call it, *religious intelligence*. He owed this not only to his education under Benedict Biscop but also to the library with which Biscop had endowed the monastery. He was said to be the most learned man in Europe: a poet, astronomer, mathematician, biographer, theologian, translator and most famously, historian. His great delight, he says, was to 'learn, to teach and to write'. 'Bede's World' gives us a feel for the range of his achievements, though there is no substitute for reading him, especially his *History of the English Church and People*, which ought to be one of the best-loved books of English Christians. But if you had asked Bede which writings he regarded as the most important, he would have said (modestly, for he was a deeply humble man), his biblical commentaries. He was working on a translation of St John's Gospel when he died. So Jarrow is one of those places where the memory enshrined here recalls us to the Christian imperative to love God not only with the heart and soul and will but also with the *mind*. Religious intelligence, biblical literacy, is I am sure a vocation for all Christians but especially for us who like Bede are priests.

It is time to gather the fragments. I have tried to say something about how sacred *place* is connected to sacred *people* and the events for which they are remembered, and how this imparts texture that can achieve the status of being truly iconic. I have hinted at six places that I believe fulfil this role in north-east England: from north to south, Lindisfarne, the Farne Islands, Bamburgh, Jarrow, Wearmouth and Hartlepool. I could have chosen others, of course, for the Christian history of north-east England is uniquely rich in this respect. I have not mentioned Hexham where the memory of the irascible Wilfrid is strong; or Yeavering by the Cheviots where Paulinus baptised; nor the Yorkshire sites that belong to the world of Northumbrian Christianity like Lastingham and Ripon; nor the scores of small, often isolated, ancient churches whose very obscurity makes them moving testimonies to lived faith and prayer across so many centuries, places where the holiness of unknown men and women is still palpable. When I was a parish priest in Northumberland 25 years ago, I got to know and love these churches; indeed, one of them was part of the united benefice I served, and I used to travel out across the moors to take services for a handful of people in a tiny moorland church that was almost beyond dating for it seemed to have merged completely with its wild remote surroundings, with the stump of a Norman castle next to it and a small cluster of houses huddling together as if for protection against the blasts of wind that swept down off Cheviot. Who knows what heroic souls weathered physical

and spiritual storms in this forgotten corner of England, the kind of men and women who seemed to step straight out of an R. S. Thomas poem?

That was, as it happened, a Durham Dean and Chapter living, so almost certainly part of the patrimony of St Cuthbert, maybe even (though this is wild conjecture) one of the many places where the body rested for a while on its long pilgrimage around the north. And this brings me back where I began, to Durham Cathedral. You will be visiting it later today, and will I am sure want to pray at the shrines of Cuthbert and Oswald, and of Bede. Where does Durham belong in the sacred geography of the north whose six 'core' sacred places I have mentioned?

I've suggested that Durham is different from the other sites I've mentioned because it has no first-hand connection with any of the saints whose shrines it houses, only a memory that has embedded itself in that place for historical reasons. Yet that memory has proved powerful beyond words, as we all recognise when we look at the immensity of the Cathedral perched on its peninsula, and consider that it was the story of the simplest and humblest of saints that led to its being built. So a 'borrowed' sanctity has, if you like, become indigenised at Durham, taken root there, for the Cathedral, St Cuthbert and the Lindisfarne Gospels are, or ought to be, inseparable in what I have called the landscape of the mind. A few years ago, I took an elderly imam from Saudi Arabia round the Cathedral. He was completely blind, but did not wish me to speak very much about the building before he had experienced it for himself. I ended the visit, as I usually do, at the shrine of St Cuthbert. Before I could say anything about him, he said at once: 'ah; I recognise here the presence of a holy man. Someone important is buried here, isn't he? I sense it, because in Islam we too have our holy places where holy men are buried.' I have pondered the word 'presence', for it says so much about *anamnesis*, how the power of religious memory is to make the past live in the present, so that the saints become our contemporaries, fellow-travellers, friends, guardians and intercessors. There is a mystical theology of person-and-place here that only prayer and contemplation will open up for us.

So Durham is not, after all, the cuckoo in the nest. It is, I think, the seventh shrine in the north-east that embraces all the others, because its sanctity of person and place is inseparable from theirs. I prefer not to use the epithet 'mother church' to describe this relationship, for historically, Durham is more daughter than mother, at least of Lindisfarne and Wearmouth-Jarrow. But the lineal descent of Durham from the sources of 7th century Christianity in Northumbria, those extraordinary places and people who were the fountainhead of an entire nation's faith, does make it in my view truly iconic of the Christian north. In the list of diocesan bishops you find in *Crockfords*, page 942 of the current edition, the Durham entry does not begin with Aldhun, the first bishop to be resident in Durham when the community of St Cuthbert arrived on the peninsula in 995. It begins with Aidan, the first bishop of Lindisfarne who arrived in Northumbria in 635. The Diocese of Durham

therefore stands in direct continuity with the Saxon church and its saints and martyrs. What Durham expresses in its many-layered relationships between place and people, and how this speaks to pilgrims of today, is a direct consequence of the same reality that we have seen lived out in the other shrines of the north whose sacred people have become part of its own sanctity.

That is something I hope you experience for yourself later today.

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At the conference of the Society of Catholic Priests