

Do the little things

Bishop Sarah's pastoral letter for March 2020

The month of March begins with the day on which we remember St. David, patron saint of Wales. A sixth-century monk, St David was an abbot and bishop known for his compassion and kindness, particularly to those who were sick or poor. During his life, David travelled far to spread Christianity among the pagan Celtic tribes of Western Britain and was also a founder of more than a dozen monasteries.

Nearly five hundred years elapsed between David's death and the first manuscripts recording his life and, as a result, it isn't clear how much of the history of David's life is legend rather than fact. However, according to historic account, written in the 11th century, an angel foretold the birth of David to St Patrick, 30 years before it happened.

It is claimed that David lived for over 100 years, and it is generally accepted that he died in 589. His last words to his followers were in a sermon on the previous Sunday:

'Be joyful, and keep your faith and your creed. Do the little things that you have seen me do and heard about.'

His words, 'Do the little things' have proved an inspiration to many down the ages.

St. Chad, first Bishop of Lichfield, is remembered on the 2nd of March. Chad was known as a person of wisdom, gentleness and humility, who often brought peace in the midst of difficult situations. He was committed to a life of prayer and teaching and the example of his life brought many to faith as he travelled from Northumbria, the place of his birth, through what is now Yorkshire and on to Mercia, where he became bishop.

As Bishop Michael has said previously:

'Chad's legacy is threaded through the history and the geography of our diocese, but all its power derived from the simple-hearted commitment with which he himself followed his Lord, and the friendly openness with which he invited others to join him.'

St. Patrick, a saint particularly close to my heart as I was born on his feast day, was also a traveller, sometimes not of his own volition. He was captured by Irish raiders when he was sixteen years old and taken to Ireland as a slave, escaping after 6 years. It is thought that he travelled to continental Europe, where he trained as a priest and later returned to Ireland as a bishop.



Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad

Patrick brought people to faith in Jesus as he walked all over Ireland and although he was faced with opposition and persecution, he continued his missionary journeys. He was humble and courageous and his determination to accept suffering and success with equal patience and endurance enabled many to hear the message of the gospel.

So, as we journey through Lent, let us take from the stories of these three ancestors in the faith, a desire to be joyful and 'do the little things' as St. David did, that help others to encounter the life transforming gospel message through our words and actions.

Let us 'walk in the footsteps of St. Chad' bringing wisdom, gentleness and peace in our encounters with others as we build good relationships in our homes, churches and communities, especially at this time of political transition.

And let us have the courage and determination of St. Patrick as we look to challenge unjust structures, as we partner with others in seeking the common good and working for justice as a people of hope.

*+Sarah Bullock
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