

Our Lady and St. Wilfrid's Church, Warwick Bridge – 12th October 2015.

Feast of St. Wilfrid

(Rom 1:1-7. Luke 11:29-32)



We gather here this evening to celebrate the feast day of St. Wilfrid, co-patron with Our Blessed Lady of this lovely church here in Warwick Bridge, which has the distinction of being the only church in Cumbria designed by that great Victorian Augustus Welby Pugin in 1841. The Catholic faith has been professed and Mass celebrated in Our Lady & St. Wilfrid's without interruption for one hundred and seventy-four years, and we continue that tradition tonight by proclaiming our faith and offering Holy Mass. You are the inheritors of a long and noble tradition, and I know that you are determined to ensure that the faith story of Our Lady & St. Wilfrid's will be passed on to those who come after you.

In his solemn introduction to his letter to the Christians in Rome the apostle Paul takes us to the very heart of the faith professed down the long years in this church. That faith is the good news of Jesus Christ, descended as a human being from the royal line of King David and now revealed as the all-powerful Son of God through his resurrection from the dead. Jesus Christ, God and man, the mystery of the Incarnation is what we believe, and what the Church has believed from the very beginning. It is this conviction that the Son of God has come among us and has sacrificed himself on the cross for love of us which brings us together week after week.

The Lord in the gospel takes his hearers to task when they asked to see a sign, something to astound them and perhaps they would then believe in him. The implication is that they were always looking for something new and exciting and out of the ordinary. Jesus himself and the Scriptures were in fact the sign if only they had sufficient faith to recognise this. Let them read the Scriptures and discover how people like Jonah and the Queen of Sheba in fact pointed to Jesus with their call to repentance. There is no substitute for the road of faith, we are called to trust and to believe in the Son of God. Only in the life to come will we have vision and a fuller understanding. We will then have the joy and excitement of heaven!

St. Wilfrid, born in Northumbria 633, died 709, had an interesting life. He was of noble stock and eventually became a bishop in the kingdom of Northumbria. He had his difficult, even turbulent moments, was exiled twice from his diocese, fought with the local king, and was even imprisoned, as well as being kidnapped while in the south of England. He travelled to Rome more than once, and was ordained/consecrated bishop in France because he questioned the good-standing of the Northern bishops of the time. He is chiefly remembered for his influence at the Synod of Whitby in 664, when he won the day over the date of Easter as against the Celtic monastic tradition. All that being said, after his death he was considered to be a saint! So saints are very ordinary people, and that gives hope to all of us who are called to be saints.

I welcome warmly Sisters Harriet and Vivian who have taken up residence here. They will continue that quiet religious presence in Warwick Bridge which began centuries ago with the followers of St. Benedict. Dear Sisters, your presence here and work in the parish is much appreciated!

+Michael G Campbell OSA
Bishop of Lancaster