



Reflection for November 18 2020 Hilda of Whitby [614-680]

⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

[Ephesians 4:4-6]

O Lord, May I be equal to Your hope of me.

If I am weak, I ask that You send only what I can bear.

If I am strong, may I shrink from no testing, that shall yield increase of strength or win security for my spirit.

I trust in Thee, O Lord. I say, 'Thou art my God.'

*My times are in Thy hand, my times are in Thy hand. **Amen.***

[A Prayer of Hilda of Whitby]

Hilda of Whitby was one of the leaders in blending the Celtic and Roman traditions in England, which became the core of our modern Anglican tradition. Growing up in the court of King Edwin, her great-uncle, Hilda was educated in the Christian tradition by one of the companions of Augustine of Canterbury, who brought Roman Christianity to England, while her adult spiritual formation was guided by Irish Bishop Aidan. The rule of life with which she led her monastic community was a blend of what she learned from Paulinus and Aidan, based in the principles of justice, devotion, chastity, peace, and charity. The community that she founded at Whitby, which included both nuns and monks, emphasized the balance between rigorous study of Scripture, prayer, and actions for the poor that was to become central to the Anglo-Catholic tradition.

Hilda is a model for us in another surprising way today. In 663, the Synod of Whitby addressed questions that divided the Roman and Celtic traditions, most famously the date of Easter. It agreed that the Roman traditions would become the prevailing custom in English Christianity, and although Hilda herself preferred the Celtic traditions she became one of the strongest leaders for reconciliation and peace.

In these days of political, cultural, and religious division, we look to Hilda of Whitby for the wisdom and vision of what is more important than our disagreements. Christians today may disagree on politics and government policy, but we are disciples of one Christ, and we share a commitment to study Scripture, to pray, and to reach out to the poor and disenfranchised. We may have different images of divine love, but we share the principles of justice, devotion, peace, and charity that centered Hilda's community. Our companions look to us for the same kind of wisdom and hope that Hilda gave to her contemporaries and our tradition of *via media* has prepared us well for the leadership that is called for.

These words that have been handed down to us from Hilda of Whitby:

Trade with gifts God has given you.

Bend your minds to holy learning that you may escape the fretting moth of littleness of mind that would wear out your souls.

Brace your wills to action that they may not be the spoil of weak desires.

Train your hearts and lips to song which gives courage to the soul.

Being buffeted by trials, learn to laugh.

Being reproved, give thanks.

Having failed, determine to succeed.

[Hilda of Whitby]