

Saint Cuthbert

*HIS LAST INSTRUCTIONS TO THE BRETHREN
CHAPTER XXXIX From Bede's Ecclesiastical History*

" I WENT in to him about the ninth hour of the day, and found him lying in one corner of his oratory before the altar. I took my seat by his side, but he spoke very little, for the weight of his suffering prevented him from speaking much. But when I earnestly asked him what last discourse and valedictory salutation he would bequeath to the brethren, he began to make a few strong admonitions respecting peace and humility, and told me to beware of those persons who strove against these virtues, and would not practise them. ' Have peace,' said he, ' and Divine charity ever amongst you: and when you are called upon to deliberate on your condition, see that you be unanimous in council. Let concord be mutual between you and other servants of Christ; and do not despise others who belong to the faith and come to you for hospitality, but admit them familiarly and kindly; and when you have entertained them, speed them on their journey: by no means esteeming yourselves better than the rest of those who partake of the same faith



and mode of life. But have no communion with those who err from the unity of the Catholic faith, either by keeping Easter at an improper time, or by their perverse life. And know and remember, that, if of two evils you are compelled to choose one, I would rather that you should take up my bones, and leave these places, to reside wherever God may send you, than consent in any way to the wickedness of schismatics, and so place a yoke upon your necks. Study diligently, and carefully observe the Catholic rules of the Fathers, and practise with zeal those institutes of the monastic life which it has pleased God to deliver to you through my ministry. For I know, that, although during my life some have despised me, yet after my death you will see what sort of man I was, and that my doctrine was by no means worthy of contempt. '

" These words, and such as these, the man of God delivered to us at intervals, for, as we before said, the violence of his complaint had taken from him the power of speaking much at once. He then spent the rest of the day until the evening in the expectation of future happiness; to which he added this also, that he spent the night in watchfulness and prayer. When his hour of evening service was come, he received from me the blessed sacrament, and thus strengthened himself for his departure, which he now knew to be at hand, by partaking of the body and blood of Christ; and when he had lifted up his eyes to heaven, and stretched out his hands above him, his soul, intent upon heavenly praises, sped his way to the joys of the heavenly kingdom.