

Stewardship Saint for May: Saint Bede the Venerable

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Saint Bede the Venerable, an English saint more popularly known as the “Venerable Bede,” was born in Sunderland, England in the year 673. Educated from the age of seven, he entered the monastery of Saint Peter in Jarrow, Northumberland, England, was ordained a deacon at age 19 and ordained a priest at age 30. The monastery at Jarrow would become the center of Anglo-Saxon learning in England, and from that monastery Saint Bede, who would remain there his entire life, became the greatest of the Anglo-Saxon scholars.

Saint Bede sought to exercise good stewardship by a balanced life of prayer, scholarship and manual labor. He rarely traveled, but attended faithfully to his monastic duties, working in the fields surrounding the monastery and being partly responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the large abbey church.

His communal prayer life was complemented by meditation, chanting of psalms and writing prayers, prose and poems that reflected his deep faith.

Saint Bede devoted himself to the study and teaching of Sacred Scripture, and to writing Biblical commentaries based on the Biblical commentaries of the Fathers of the Church and to the lives of the saints. He also taught Latin to those who entered the monastery or came for an education.

The term “A.D.” (Anno Domini, Latin for “year of the Lord”) for the years of the Christian era was popularized by Saint Bede. His Ecclesiastical History of the English People, completed in 731, was widely read throughout England and Europe and became a classic. His book is still reprinted and studied.

The Venerable Bede passed away on May 26, 735. In the final weeks of his life, he completed the translation of the Gospel of John into Old English (his native tongue) by dictating to the young monk who served as his scribe. It is said that he passed away chanting the doxology “Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.”

Pope Leo XIII named Saint Bede a Doctor of the Church. He is renowned as the most important historian of the Church in England and is the patron saint of scholars. His feast day is May 25.