



St Cuthbert: Wild and Wet

Equipment: Picture of an otter paw-print (either projected onto a screen or on paper but large enough to be seen).

Plan:

-  Ask if anybody can guess what kind of animal the print is from. Unless a lucky or super-knowledgeable child suggests an otter, give them a clue: e.g. furry, four legs, lives around water and hunts fish.
-  Explain that St Cuthbert lived much of his life by the sea, and had a special relationship with many watery creatures, particularly otters and eider-ducks.
-  Cuthbert was a monk and a bishop, who was always cheerful and always paid attention to God, people and animals.
-  He often used to go into the sea to pray. Once when he came out of the water after many hours, one of his brother monks saw some otters join him on the beach. They rubbed themselves against him affectionately, drying and warming his legs.
-  St Cuthbert spent the last part of his life living on an island, the Inner Farne.
-  He forbade anyone from hurting or hunting the eider-ducks and other birds on his island, and it is still a bird sanctuary today (more than 1000 years later!)
-  Excitingly, otter tracks have been spotted recently on the Farne Islands. Because of human use of pesticides and hunting, otters almost became extinct in the UK. Their numbers declined dramatically between the 1950s and the 1980s. But because people noticed this and took action to change things, otter numbers gradually began to increase again.

Purpose/Teaching: The recovery of the otter population proves that when human beings care and pay attention, like St Cuthbert, we can make a difference.

Let's pray: Watchful God, give us eyes to see and hears to hear the wonder of your world. Following St Cuthbert's example teach us to love, enjoy and protect our fellow creatures. May we always remember that our love and our choices make a difference to both to them and to you; Amen.

