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Lindisfarne Gospels: The Saint John's Bible linked to earliest Christian communities

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Lindisfarne Gospels: The Saint John's Bible Linked to Earliest Christian Communities



On a recent trip to visit my wife's family, I had the opportunity to visit the Holy Island of Lindisfarne on the coast of Northumberland in the northeast of England.

This gorgeous, stark island was the home of one of the earliest Christian *monastic* communities in northern England, founded by Irish missionary Aidan around 635 AD. The most famous resident of Lindisfarne was St. Cuthbert, who was the Bishop of the monastery (the Abbot was in Durham) and who died in 687 AD. The illuminated manuscript that became known as the Lindisfarne Gospels was created around 700 AD to honor St. Cuthbert.

The Lindisfarne Gospels are on display in the British Library, but there is a museum on the Holy Island that describes the history and production of this renowned illuminated manuscript. The exhibit about the gospels and the monastic ruins on the island were both powerful reminders of the links Saint John's Abbey and *The Saint John's Bible* have to the earliest days of the Catholic church. The monastery is, of course, part of the 1500 year tradition on monastic life begun by St. Benedict in the early 500's. *The Saint John's Bible*, overseen by Donald Jackson, is the first illuminated Bible commissioned by a monastery in 500 years, but is part of the venerable tradition that includes great works of art and spirituality like the Lindisfarne Gospels.

It can be easy to forget during busy days in Collegeville that Saint John's is closely tied to a historical and religious tradition that connects us across time and geography in ways that few other communities share.

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Michael Hemesath is the 13th president of Saint John's University. A 1981 SJU graduate, Hemesath is the first layperson appointed to a full presidential term at SJU. You can find him on Twitter [at] [PrezHemesath](#).