

St Augustine of Canterbury arrived in England carrying almost nothing visible.

No armies.

No wealth.

No political power.

Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And yet through that mission, England was changed forever.

When we hear today's Gospel, we hear exactly the kind of words Augustine himself must have prayed over and over again:

**“The harvest is rich but the labourers are few.”**

Christ sends the seventy-two ahead of Him into towns and villages.

And notice how vulnerable they are.

No money bag.

No sack.

No worldly security.

Because the Church spreads finally not by worldly strength, but by holiness, truth, sacrifice, and grace.

And that was true for St Augustine.

When Pope Gregory the Great sent Augustine from Rome to England in the sixth century, England was deeply pagan in many places.

The old Roman Christian structures had largely collapsed.

The land was fragmented.

Violent.

Uncertain.

And Augustine himself was frightened enough at one point to want to turn back.

But Gregory insisted:

go forward.

Because Christ had already gone before them.

And that matters for us now because we too live in a country where the Faith has grown weak in many places.

Many people baptised but uncatechised.  
Many churches historically Christian but spiritually tired.  
Many people searching without knowing where to look.

In some ways, modern England again resembles mission territory.

And perhaps that is why saints like Augustine matter so much now.

Because they remind us the Church has faced spiritual darkness before.

And Christ remained faithful.

But here at St Edward's there is another beautiful connection.

Because the mission begun by St Augustine eventually helped shape the Catholic England into which St Edward the Confessor was born centuries later.

Without Augustine's mission, there is no Christian kingdom of Edward.

No flowering of English sanctity.  
No monasteries.  
No great churches.  
No Christian culture rooted in the Gospel.

The seed Augustine planted eventually bore fruit in saints like Edward.

And St Edward himself is such a contrast to modern ideas of power.

A king, yet gentle.  
A ruler, yet prayerful.  
A man with authority, yet deeply humble before God.

He understood something modern society forgets:

A nation cannot remain healthy if it loses its soul.

Political strength alone is never enough.

A people must know truth.  
Worship God.  
Live morally.

Care for the poor.  
Honour justice.

And all of that ultimately flows from conversion.

Today's first reading from St Paul gives us the heart of authentic evangelisation.

Paul says:

**“We were gentle among you, like a nursing mother caring for her children.”**

That is extraordinary language.

The apostles were not salesmen.

Not ideologues.

They loved souls.

Paul says:

**“We were determined to share with you not only the Gospel of God but our very selves.”**

And that was true of Augustine too.

Mission always costs the missionary personally.

You give your life away.

And perhaps this is something we must recover again in parish life.

Christianity cannot survive merely as inherited culture.

Each generation must receive the Faith personally.

Love Christ personally.

Pray personally.

Encounter the sacraments personally.

Otherwise the Faith slowly becomes memory instead of life.

And yet there is reason for hope.

Because the same Gospel that converted pagan England is still powerful now.

The same Christ preached by Augustine is still alive.

The same sacraments still carry grace.

The same Holy Spirit still converts hearts.

The Church is never renewed mainly by cleverness or marketing.

She is renewed by saints.

By holy priests.

Holy parents.

Holy parishioners.

Holy ordinary Catholics quietly living the Gospel faithfully.

And perhaps this feast asks something direct of us here at St Edward's.

Not simply: "Do we admire the saints?"

But: "Will we continue their work?"

Because Augustine's mission did not end with Augustine.

And St Edward's witness did not end with St Edward.

Now the Faith must be handed on again through us.

In homes.

In schools.

In parish life.

In ordinary conversations.

In reverence at Mass.

In prayer.

The Gospel today ends with the apostles proclaiming:

**"The kingdom of God is very near to you."**

That remains the Church's message still.

Not ideology.

Not politics.

Not self-help.

The kingdom of God has come near in Jesus Christ.

And England will not be renewed by anger or nostalgia alone.

It will be renewed when ordinary people become saints again.

That is how Augustine changed this land.

And it is still how Christ changes souls now.