

NOBILITATE VIGENS FURSEUS

Foreword by the Rt Revd Graham James

On Friday September 16th 2011 a choral evening office was sung as usual in Norwich Cathedral. It was simply part of the daily round of worship which has been part of the life of that great church for more than nine hundred years. The words and music of much of the office sung that evening would not have been heard in Norwich Cathedral for centuries and may even have been a complete novelty. Yet they were very ancient words and music in honour of St Fursey, the early seventh century saint from Ireland who was part of the Celtic mission to East Anglia, complementing the Roman mission of St Felix. While St Felix is found in effigy over the North Transept door to Norwich Cathedral (appropriately the door through which the Bishop comes from his house next door) St Fursey has made something of a comeback in recognition in recent years. The singing of his office crowned the new recognition of his significance. The history of that office is well explained by Dr Ann Buckley in her lecture and this publication by the Fursey Pilgrims is yet another landmark in their assiduous uncovering of a rich tradition of prayer, worship and mission flowing from St Fursey's life and ministry.

Sometimes, and with good reason, the contemporary enthusiasm for all things Celtic is considered a romantic illusion. It is very easy for us to project all our desires and fantasies about the Christian Church on to the sometimes elusive Celtic tradition. The great virtue of the Fursey Pilgrims is that they have added enormously to our knowledge and understanding of all that flowed from St Fursey's ministry within the Christian tradition of which he formed such an important part. This publication is further evidence of academic seriousness of the sort which is not as dry as dust but is given expression in living worship, as it was in our Cathedral Church here in Norwich in September 2011.

Thanks be to God for this publication and for the life, witness and continuing intercession of St Fursey.

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