

## Alcuin of York, Deacon and Abbot of Tours (730-804)

*Observed 20 May*

Born into an English noble family in York, Alcuin was a student of the Venerable Bede (notable for writing the first history of England). He was a brilliant student, who excelled in many areas of scholarship. After his ordination to the diaconate Alcuin was put in charge of the school at York Cathedral in the year 770. His reputation spread to the continent and in 781 Emperor Charlemagne asked Alcuin to come to his court to further the emperor's efforts to enhance education throughout his domain. Alcuin worked tirelessly, establishing schools at many cathedrals and monasteries. During the chaotic centuries since the collapse of the Roman Empire, enormous amounts of learning had been lost. Because so much ancient learning had been forgotten and countless manuscripts had been lost or destroyed. Alcuin established numerous scriptoria for the copying of whatever manuscripts remained, both Christian and non-Christian. Alcuin deserves enormous credit for the survival of the bulk of ancient texts. With so much to be done, Alcuin is said to have invented cursive writing to allow scribes to copy more in less time. He also wrote numerous treatises, poems, and prayers. As if all that scholarly work was not enough for a fully busy life, Alcuin was also instrumental in the reorganization of the Latin liturgy and the preservation of many prayers from the early church. When we take delight in ancient prayers, in the writings of Roman and Greek classics, we should take a moment to thank Alcuin for his vision and dedication.

*A prayer by Alcuin*

Eternal Light, shine into our hearts; Eternal Goodness, delivers us from evil; Eternal Power, be our support; Eternal Wisdom, scatter the darkness of our ignorance; Eternal Pity, have mercy on us— So that with all our heart and mind and soul and strength we may seek your face, and be brought by your infinite mercy into your holy presence through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Lessons* Ecclesiasticus 39:1-9; Psalm 37:3-6,32-33; Titus 2:1-3; Matthew 13:10-16

*Collect* Almighty God, who in a rude and barbarous age raised up your deacon Alcuin to rekindle the light of learning: illumine our minds, we pray, that amid the uncertainties and confusions of our own time we may show forth your eternal truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.