

March 17, 2023



Center for Spiritual Development

Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH LENT

Photo by Alan Carrillo from Unsplash

PUT YOUR GREEN ON

By Julie Mussché

“Landscape has a soul and a presence, and landscape-living in the mode of silence is always wrapped in seamless prayer.”

John O'Donohue

Walking in Wonder: Eternal Wisdom for a Modern World

Reflection

Sometime back (August 2021) I had shared a reflection about visiting St. Patrick's burial site at Down Cathedral, Downpatrick Ireland. The focus of the writing was an invitation to travel through life and creation with a pilgrim's heart. To do so opens us up to wonder and the sacredness of place. Looking back on that particular journey, it seems the entire adventure was filled with holy amazement.

Starting from Amsterdam, our voyage moved southwesterly through the English Channel toward the Isles of Scilly in Cornwall, England. Specifically,

we would be visiting St. Mary's, a part of an island chain, located in the south most point of the British Isles. Consequently, our first full day was at sea and we moved past the White Cliffs of Dover which stood out remarkably against the sky. An evident and visible landmark, the landmark no doubt sparked thoughts of home for those who fought during World War II and were stationed in coastal France. Apparently, on a clear day one can see the Cliffs across the water.

Visiting St. Mary's was a delight, a short excursion before moving to the next destination, St. Peter's Port in Guernsey. We were welcomed warmly at both distinctive locales and our travelling tribe enjoyed the beauty of the areas, both environmental and architectural. From there, we hop-scotched from one port to the next: Dublin, Liverpool, Ulster, Killybegs, Galway, Fowey, Waterford-Dunmore and Cherbourg, Normandy. It was certainly an extensive journey over a short period of time, offering a glimpse of the diversity of God's expression of creation.

Some observations from this pilgrim's experience. It is evident, while approaching land from open water, why Ireland is referred to as the Emerald Isle. It is extraordinary in its verdant expression. Likewise, there is a sense of the ancient permeating off the landscape of the British Isles. The physical human artifacts of this include the gravesite of St. Patrick and Grey Abbey, where the ruins of a twelfth century Cistercian monastery sit along the St. Patrick pilgrim's trail. It is as if the past spills over into the present. The notion of "thin places," where heaven and earth unite with pulsating mystery, is equally understandable.

The impact of two world wars is imprinted on the landscape as well as on the companioning historical narrative. From the Nazi occupation of Guernsey to the memorials at Normandy, there is a remembering of the sacrifices and horrors of war. The extensive coastline offers an impression of the overwhelming odds of the D-Day invasion, and what a remarkable feat it was. We visited the Normandy American Cemetery and while we looked out over the dazzling white crosses and Stars of David, Taps played through the loudspeakers. A definite "Amen" for this pilgrim.

Happy St. Patrick's Day!



Photo of Killybegs by Julie Mussché

For Pondering

- What does it mean to you to see the world with a pilgrim's heart?
- How does journeying to unknown places help to unbridle a contemplative posture?
- Where does God meet you along the way?

Closing Prayer

*I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord watches over you—*

*the Lord is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
the Lord will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.*

PSALM 121

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