

Good Friday Pilgrimage 2025

Churn Valley Benefice

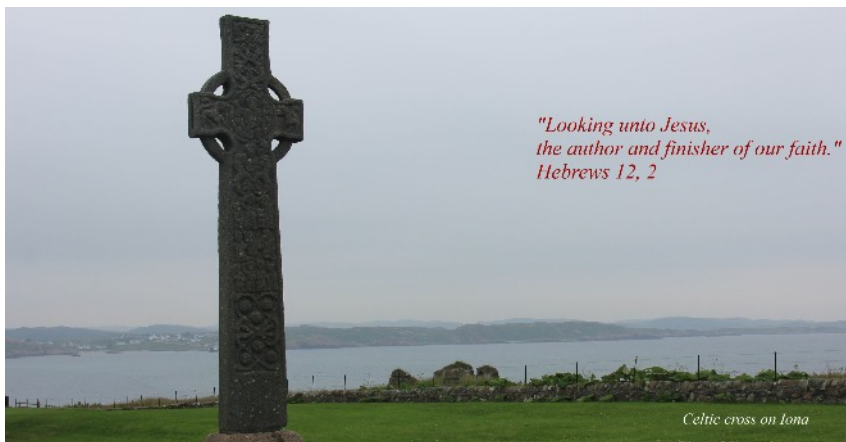
**Coberley
Cowley
Elkstone
Colesbourne**



*Reflections drawn from “Daily readings” with George MacLeod,
founder of the Iona Community.*

*Sonnets are from “Sounding the Seasons” and “Parable and Paradox”
by Malcolm Guite’.*

Prayers adapted from Iona Community resources



Reflective music used is in the Celtic style, including both traditional and more modern examples. The particular pieces are:

Coberley: “Hope for tomorrow” by Phil Anderson

Cowley: “Oram’s Fancy” by Phil Anderson

Elkstone: “O righteous God” by Dave Billbrough

Colesbourne: “Slane” (*Be thou my vision*) - traditional

St Giles, Coberley

Reading Luke 23, 39 - 43



Reflection: Going home

When the Prodigal Son decided to go home, we read of him that ‘when he came unto *himself* he said, “I will go unto my father.”’ The difference between man and the beasts is that beasts, in their natural condition, are themselves. Man in his natural condition is not ‘himself’. In his natural condition he is less than himself. He comes to himself, to the Humanity that was God’s intention for him, only when he decides to return home. And to reach home, to become converted, to be born again, is to become a new creation, which is to be Human at last.

Sonnet: Maundy Thursday



Here is the source of every sacrament,
The all-transforming presence of the Lord,
Replenishing our every element,
Remaking us in his creative word.
For here the earth herself gives bread and wine,
The air delights to hear his Spirit’s speech,
The fire dances where the candles shine,
The waters cleanse us with his gentle touch.
And here he shows the full extent of love
To us whose love is always incomplete,
In vain we search the heavens high above,
The God of love is kneeling at our feet.
Though we betray him, though it is the night,
He meets us here and loves us into light.

Prayer

Lord, so often we lose our way; we let you down, we betray your love. We often we find ourselves out in the dark night, where we feel far from your love for us. Lord, when we are lost, come to us; when we are afraid, strengthen us; when we despair, reach out to us with your love, and your words which say, ‘Do not be afraid: you are mine. You are my friend and I love you. Forgive yourself as I forgive you.’ And teach us what it really means to “abide in you” and to welcome the work of the gardener as he shapes us for His glory. Amen

St Mary the Virgin, Cowley



Reading John 14, 27

Reflection: Benediction of a day

To take a natural analogy, there is a living flower. You want to have it, so you pluck it. But, by your act of plucking, it dies. You are fascinated by a sparkling running stream, a living stream of water. But, if you grasp it, it runs through your fingers, you scoop it into a pail, you no longer have life, but just a bucket of H₂O. There is a bracing wind that enlivens your whole being. But try to catch it in a bag and you have stagnant air. All this reminds us how not to get in touch with life. The only way to achieve a sense of God's presence is to put yourself in the way of Him. In our analogy, you achieve a sense of life in the presence of a flower, by a running stream, in a bracing wind. You come home to say you have had a perfectly lovely day, which means a lively day. It has been a benediction of a day. You can only achieve a sense of God in a similar way ... You can only find God in the now.

Sonnet: He that has ears



How hard to hear the things I think I know,
To peel aside the thin familiar film
That wraps and seals your secret just below:
An undiscovered good, a hidden realm,
A kingdom of reversal, where the poor
Are rich in blessing and the tragic rich
Still struggle, trapped in trappings at the door
They never opened, Life just out of reach...

Open the door for me and take me there.
Love, take my hand and lead me like the blind,
Unbandage me, unwrap me from my fear,
Open my eyes, my heart, my soul, my mind.
I struggle with these grave clothes, this dark earth,
But you are calling, "Lazarus, come forth!"

Prayer

Father, We struggle, we fall, we fail, we cry out and often think you have abandoned us. God help us in some small way to understand that when we believe you are silent or far off, or have ditched us completely, that there still remains a simple truth: that we are not abandoned, but held. Amen

St John the Evangelist, Elkstone



Reading John 15, 5 - 8

Reflection: Release from sins

It is the age-long restlessness of the human heart to feel all right every way, to feel free inwardly. The trouble is 'how'. The best shot ever made in the ancient world was the Jewish attempt. They said, 'You alone can feel free by obeying God's commandments.' But they ended up with over a thousand commands to be obeyed in their terrifying effort to feel free. But after they had sincerely tried to keep the whole law they didn't feel free. No wonder Christ had to come to so desperate a situation. He offered a new way altogether. He said, in effect, 'I'll take the sin.' To have faith in Christ is to believe that Jesus releases us from our sins. It is to believe the future is safe in His hands, both for the rest of our lives and for our lives beyond the grave. But do we think faith is an affair of the mind – assent to certain propositions? The Bible never thought in these terms. The Bible always thinks that faith is an affair of action.

Sonnet: Jesus is given his cross



He gives himself again with all his gifts
And now we give him something in return.
He gave the earth that bears, the air that lifts,
Water to cleanse and cool, fire to burn,
And from these elements he forged the iron,
From strands of life he wove the growing wood,
He made the stones that pave the roads of Zion,
He saw it all and saw that it is good.
We took his iron to edge an axe's blade,
We took the axe and laid it to the tree,
We made a cross of all that he has made,
And laid it on the one who made us free.
Now he receives again and lifts on high
The gifts he gave and we have turned awry.

Prayer

Lord, through this day may I experience that inner strength which bears and believes and hopes and endures all things. For yours is the goodness that makes sense of this day, and brings calm to our souls. Strengthen me to make my life an extravagant gift of love to you and to others, knowing I can only do so by the power of your death and resurrection. Amen

St James, Colesbourne

Reading John 16, 32 - 33



Reflection: The inside story

A very famous actor was once staying at a country house party. It was Sunday, and a quite unknown vicar had been asked to supper. After some recitations the actor, to honour Sunday, was asked to recite some scripture, and he chose to recite the 23rd psalm, 'The Lord is My Shepherd'. Everyone applauded the artistry of his rendering, and the host asked the vicar to recite the same psalm. His rendering received no response, except a silence. The vicar was embarrassed by his seeming failure, but afterwards the actor said to him, 'Don't be depressed. You moved us greatly. You see, I know the psalm, but you know the Shepherd.'

Sonnet: I am the good shepherd



When so much shepherding has gone so wrong,
So many pastors hopelessly astray,
The so often preyed on by the strong,
So many bruised and broken on the way.
The very name of shepherd seems besmeared,
The fold and flock themselves are torn in half,
The lambs we left to face all we have feared
Are caught between the wasters and the wolf.

Good Shepherd, now your flock has need of you,
One finds the fold and ninety-nine are lost
Out in the darkness and the icy dew,
And no one knows how long this night will last.
Restore us: call us back to you by name,
And by your life laid down, redeem our shame.

Prayer

Beloved God ... You hold the world in your hands, yet know our human intimacies. On the cross you thought of your mother and your friends. You cared for their future. And right where we are that caring love enfolds us, tenderly reminding us that in the midst of ordinary living, your Spirit is with us, sometimes challenging, always surprising. Amen



