



From the Rector

Dear Friends in Christ:

My recent trip was a great joy filled with “God moments” along the way. Ireland is one of my favorite places in the world. It has the unique blend of people, land and faith that makes it special to me. I have grown even more fond of Ireland because of the early Celtic Christianity that fostered a different approach to bringing the faith to people than the model that became the predominant mode from the 7th century to the present.

Christianity came early to Ireland, perhaps as early as the 2nd century. It took firm root in the 5th century with the likes of Saints Patrick, Brigid, Columba and others. It blended the Christian message with the ancient practices of the pre-Christian religions. Celtic Christianity maintained its connection to the land, God’s creation, and sense of community. Men and women, clergy, monks and lay people lived in greater community and without the sense of hierarchy that would later dominate.

The monastic communities of Clonmacnois and Glendalough remain as testaments to early Irish Christianity. These places became centers of faith and learning that would foster a rich experience of Christianity that may well be a solid model for us today in our world.

Today’s people seem disconnected from the rhythm of life and nature that was paramount to the Celtic Christians. The way Creation moves, season after season, testifies to our God who has created a wonder. The Irish knew and appreciated what too many of us have lost ... God is found in and underlies all of Creation. We might better appreciate the world we live in if we were more deeply connected with what God has made! We have turned the beauty, awe and majesty of Creation, the seasons of the year and the rhythm of each day into so much less than what it is ... the basis and grounding of our lives. We get a taste of it when we rush off to the shore for the summer, and vacation in the mountains at the beach, or travel to someplace far from home. Celtic Christianity makes the connection with creation a significant part of faith, not an afterthought!

Today people seem disconnected from the concept of

community. We have computers that “connect” us; 24/7 access with cell phones and blackberries; virtual reality that allows us to be something other than what we are; television and computer games to “entertain” us. Despite all of this, people feel less a part of life rather than more. Celtic Christians accepted a place for all people within the life of their community. Each person, each role and each life was valued. Monastic communities were surrounded by merchants, crafts people, farmers; as well as, pilgrims and visitors throughout the year who made their ways to these places. Religion was not separate from daily life, it was a part of it. The clergy and religious men and women invited the entire community to be part of their worship, education and other aspects of life. What a difference our lives might be if Church was an integral part of our lives, instead of an occasional visit one a week. Faith and pray were of interest and importance to every member of the Celtic Christian community. Perhaps there would be less depression, isolation and addictions if we were more deeply connected with God through a faith community.

Ireland is a land that feels different when I visit. There is a faith history and heritage that is part of the still part of the land today. It is one that is hundreds of years old. It has sustained more than one person through hard times. There are the echoes of ancient liturgies that help people to recognize and walk with God throughout their lives. There’s an appreciation for God’s creation and people that comes across as alien to us.

Perhaps we might learn to find God by looking at the old Celtic Christianity. For me, it holds out the promise of fostering deep emotional and spiritual bonds with God. Sometimes there is much we can learn from the old ways, and challenge some of the empty habits that we have developed today.

Do I love Ireland? Yes! Does it speak to me spiritually? Yes! Can we learn from Celtic Christianity? Yes! Don’t be surprised if you see some of the influence of this trip and place in the days to come. Ireland certainly was filled with “God moments” for me. May each of us find those moments in our lives.

God bless, have a happy and safe summer and may you find those “God moments” for yourselves in the days to come. With warmest regards, I remain, faithfully yours in Christ,

Fr. Pat