

THE WELLSRING COMMUNITY INC

# PILGRIMAGE 2003



CAMPING WITH THE CREATOR  
SPIRIT

JOHN CONNOR

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# *CAMPING WITH THE CREATOR SPIRIT:*

## *THE PILGRIMAGE*

Thanks so much for all the encouragement you have continued to give me as we have prepared for the pilgrimage.

The original schedule continues to hold together:

- Instalment 4:  
April/May      Finding spiritual meaning in relationships  
Instalment 5:  
May/June      Finding spiritual meaning in the stranger or the other  
Instalment 6:  
June/July      Great pilgrims and great pilgrimages.



John Connor has prepared the material for this instalment. I am so thankful for John's contribution. He writes

*This instalment considers the central spiritual significance that relationships have in our lives. It does this particularly in the context of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is very much about relationships. It is about deepening our relationship with God. However as St. Ignatius reminds us we may "find God in all things." This is especially so in our relationships with other people.*

*So as you prepare for the pilgrimage, this instalment looks at such areas as our understanding of the Communion of Saints (both "the great cloud of witnesses" of Hebrews 12 and the people we will meet on pilgrimage); the relationships that we will share with our fellow pilgrims; the importance of friendship in the Christian journey and also of "the soul friend," who was a significant person in Celtic spirituality; and our relationships with Aboriginal people we will meet in 'the Centre.' Underlying all this is the centrality for the Christian pilgrim of our relationship with God. It is the desire to deepen this relationship that is for many people, the central reason for going on pilgrimage. The instalment concludes with some journeying prayers that come from Esther De Waal's book- "The Celtic Way of Prayer"*

*Again, in this instalment I have drawn on the writings of a number of spiritual guides in the area of Christian pilgrimage. There are suggestions for prayer and reflection to use over the month.*

Salem-al-salakim--Peace

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## **Day 1: The Communion of Saints and Pilgrimage**

Cintra Pemberton, *Soulfaring: Celtic pilgrimage, then and now*. (Morehouse Publishing, SPCK.)

Many people are taking a new look at the Communion of saints, both as a teaching of the church and as an experience that informs our daily lives and gives them more meaning. Increasingly we recognise that we are not alone, that those who have gone before us as well as all who live on earth today are interconnected. Nor can we consider ourselves independent from those who in years to come will follow us. Accepting the concept of one human family that rejoices in diversity and embraces inclusivity is an important step towards wholeness and freedom.

Thus, pilgrimage is once more assuming great importance for the people of God. Men and women who would never have expected to become twentieth century pilgrims have found themselves drawn to ancient pilgrim places and have found in them not some esoteric devotional luxury, but a clarity and vision that are necessary for truly human life and growth in holiness. People who do not consider themselves regular walkers or hikers are finding themselves walking ancient pilgrim pathways, 'praying with their legs' as the saying goes. The pilgrim instinct is deep in the human heart, and the kind of pilgrimage we undertake, the kind of search for the holy we engage in, reflects our own understanding of God and the world we live in. (p.57)

When visiting and praying in holy places while in the company of fellow pilgrims, with other seekers of the Holy, one feels the presence of unknown saints profoundly. One has the sense of being in the presence of holy persons, even though perhaps nameless, who lived in a particular place at a particular time and left their particular mark. Though they lived long in the past, today they are alongside us in the great Communion of Saints.

The Communion of saints also includes those who live and pray today at the sites visited.

The people who care for such sites are also part of the Communion of saints. Meeting people who care for the sites, whether state employees or local clergy or shopkeepers or local residents, is very important. Personal interaction with other people at the place of pilgrimage is a vital aspect of the pilgrimage experience... When we are able to invite local residents to share a picnic or dinner or tea with us, thereby breaking bread together, both we and they are greatly enriched. And not infrequently lasting relationships are formed. Such interactions are truly incarnational, truly a finding of the Holy, and both pilgrim and local resident are changed within.

Cintra Pemberton writes of her experience of taking her first Celtic pilgrimage group to Nevers in south west Wales, back in 1992.

I met some of the people who live in the tiny village and who today worship at St. Brynach's church. I remember well one of the first letters I received saying how glad they were that I would be bringing a pilgrimage group to visit them. Pilgrimage is a strong part of Nevers' history, and yet in many ways the modern world has passed Nevers by.. " We're so terribly isolated," said one of the church members, " and when pilgrims come today, it brightens our lives and strengthens our Christian faith. For," she continued," where would any of us be without Christian community?"

### **Suggestions**

1. As you have read the thoughts of a leader of pilgrimages to holy places in Celtic Christianity, you may have been feeling that we lack such ancient holy places in Australia. Yet in our journey to the Centre, we will be visiting places that have been of great spiritual significance to Aborigines for thousands of years. The desert and wilderness also have a deep spiritual significance for Christians as a solitary place of prayer and renewal. What thoughts and feelings come up for you as you contemplate this journey to the Centre of our continent?
2. Pilgrimage to places of long spiritual significance can bring a sense of closeness to those who have lived and prayed and ministered there in years past. Reflect on your own experiences of visits to such "sacred sites". You may like to write about those experiences in your journal. Do you look forward to a similar experience in the journey of Wellspring members and friends to the Centre?

3. “ Personal interaction with other people at the place of pilgrimage is a vital aspect of the pilgrimage experience.” Such interaction with Aboriginal and other local people living in the Centre will be an important part of part of our pilgrimage. Again what feelings come up for you as you contemplate such meetings? You may wish to write a prayer committing these times to God. Read and reflect on passages relating to the theme of the Communion of Saints eg. Hebrews 11 – 12:4 and Romans 16.

## **Day 2: Journeying Together.**

Cintra Pemberton, *Soulfaring: Celtic pilgrimage, then and now.* (Morehouse Publishing, SPCK.)

In effect, the pilgrim’s journey begins even before the pilgrim leaves home. It begins with the decision to undertake a pilgrimage in the first place. Many intentional pilgrimage groups prepare for the journey by engaging in times of shared prayer, reading, and in some cases even involvement with the local church congregation. The activities leading up to the departure are important, and the more the pilgrim-to-be engages in preparatory prayer and study, the more likely the “search for the Holy” will be successful.

Pilgrimage typically is made in the company of other pilgrims, with the entire group serving as an *anamchairde* (soul friend) to one another, searching together for that which is Holy. Today’s pilgrims may not make up stories to tell one another throughout the day to help the time pass by, as did Chaucer’s pilgrims, but pilgrimage groups typically share their spiritual experiences along the way informally and pray together regularly. The old saying that “ the family that prays together stays together” is also true with pilgrims - the bonding that takes place in a praying group of pilgrims with a common focus is very powerful indeed.

The first gathering of the pilgrim band is an important part of the pilgrimage experience: when pilgrim meets pilgrim, the shared search for the holy begins. Even the first conversations are likely to touch on spiritual topics and inner journeys. Subsequent travel, site visits, guide presentations, lectures, prayer times, meals, postcards sent home, souvenirs bought, tokens or mementos of the trip, and even the homeward journey are all part of the cumulative pilgrimage experience. Each kind of interaction between pilgrims travelling together is important.

On the journey itself, the use of pilgrimage time is tremendously important. Although visiting holy places in a prayerful attitude is perhaps to be assumed, the amount of time allowed for such visits is significant. A once-over-lightly stop at a holy site followed by hurried return to the coach for transportation to another site for another once-over-lightly stop is not likely to give the would-be-pilgrim a chance to drink deeply of the spiritual riches to be found there. Generous time needs to be allowed at each holy place. Although this may mean visiting fewer holy sites, it also means pilgrims will be able to savour the particular spiritual quality, or *numen*, of each place. Such use of time will greatly enhance the overall pilgrim experience. (p. 5-6).

## **Suggestions.**

1. Using the *lectio divina* approach (read a few times, meditate on a particular phrase or verse, pray, read and reflect on 1 Corinthians 12: 12 – 31.
2. Is there an opportunity for you to meet with other local pilgrims to the Centre to discuss the journey, to pray, read and worship together before you begin. Could you perhaps facilitate this if nothing is planned at this stage? You may also like to share with your local Christian fellowship about the forthcoming pilgrimage.
4. Reflect on previous journeys spent with travelling companions. How was this experience for you? Going on of the pilgrimage looks toward times of shared prayer, worship, and conversations concerning our experience of the sacred. You may like to write about your anticipation of this time together.
5. You may like to pray this prayer or to write your own - “Loving God, help me to be present to others on life’s journey and on our pilgrimage to the Centre. Give me a listening ear, an assurance of the quality of my presence and a recognition of the value of simply being there with and for others. May our time together be rich in fellowship with each other and with you. Amen.”
6. Slow your breathing down and as you breathe repeat the words, “ just to be is a blessing”.

### **Day 3: Pilgrimage and Friendship.**

Charles C. Taliaferro, *Praying with C.S. Lewis*. (Companions for the Journey series). Saint Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, Winona, Minnesota.

In his book entitled *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis described affection, friendship, eros and agape. When describing friends he wrote:

Friends are not primarily interested in each other. It is when we are doing things together that friendship springs up – painting, sailing ships, praying, philosophising, fighting shoulder to shoulder. Friends look in the same direction. Lovers look at each other: that is in opposite directions.

In going together on pilgrimage, people are united in a common “search for the holy.” There is time for praying together. There is the opportunity for genuine friendships to be made. In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis wrote:

Some of you may feel that this (transformational change) is very much unlike your own experience. You may say “I’ve never had the sense of being helped by an invisible Christ, but I often have been helped by other human beings.” That is rather like the woman in the first war who said that if there were a bread shortage it would not bother her house because they always ate toast. If there were no help from Christ there would be no help from other human beings. He works on us in all sorts of ways: not only through what we think our “religious life.” He works through Nature, through our own bodies, through books, sometimes through experiences which seem (at the time) anti-Christian. . . . But above all, he works on us through each other.” (p. 148)

Lewis saw friendships as expressing something of the difference and diversity of life. Friendship grows between people who are different and who celebrate and enjoy that difference as well as that which they hold in common. Cintra Pemberton describes the experience of friendship whilst on pilgrimage:

The rest of the group was milling around in a comfortable togetherness. Some were going into the prayer chapel, or stooping in front of the stone altar tracing the deeply grooved crosses worn into the heads. I saw someone kneeling at the grave, praying with rosary beads, and someone else sitting on the ground writing in what I guessed was a journal. Still others were talking quietly, asking questions, getting to know one another, generally enjoying a truly holy and happy time. What was all around me was the Communion of saints, very much alive and well. (p.97, *Soulfaring*)

Cintra Pemberton also speaks, as we have already noted, of the whole pilgrimage group becoming soul friends to each other. The Gaelic term is *anam cara*. *Anam* is the Gaelic word for soul and *cara* is the word for friend. So *anam cara* in the Celtic world was the soul friend. In the early Celtic Church, a person who acted as a teacher companion and guide was called an *anam cara*. The soul friend became someone with whom you shared your deeper self and inner spiritual journey.

John O’Donohue writes “the *anam cara* is God’s gift. Friendship is the nature of God. The Christian concept of God as Trinity is the most sublime articulation of Otherness and intimacy, an eternal interflow of friendship. This perspective discloses the beautiful fulfilment of our immortal longings in the words of Jesus who said: “I call you friends”. (p.36, *Anam Cara*)

### **SUGGESTIONS**

1. Read and reflect ( perhaps using the lectio divina approach ) on the words of Jesus as found in John’s gospel, chapter 15, verses 7-17.
2. Remember and give thanks for those who have been soul friends to you in life’s journey. Is there a soul friend that you now have? Give thanks and pray for that person.
3. For those of us who are married, our closest friend and soul friend may be our life’s partner. Charles Taliaferro, in his book *Praying with C.S. Lewis*, writes: “In Lewis’s reciprocal relationship with Joy, he shared with one and the same person affection, eros, friendship, and agape. The most precious gift that friendship with Joy and their marriage gave to Lewis was the continual impact of something intimate and close, and yet at the same time unmistakably other, resistant, real.”
4. Contemplate your coming pilgrimage to the Centre with other friends and members of Wellspring, many of whom you may not have yet met. What feelings come up for you? Commend your relationships with your fellow pilgrims to God in prayer.

## **Day 4: A Celtic Soul Friend – St. Brigit of Kildare.**

Mary C. Earle and Sylvia Maddox, *Praying with Celtic Saints*, Saint Mary's Press, Christian Brother's Publications, Winona, Minnesota.

St. Brigit, also known as Bride or Brigid, was born of a king and a slave around the year 452. She was a person with a deep compassion for the poor and for those in need. The story is told that when Brigit went forward to receive the veil of the religious life, the bishop said the words of ordination for a bishop, and when his assistant protested that such a prayer should not be said over a woman, the bishop replied: "No power have I in this matter. That dignity has been given by God to Brigit, beyond every other woman."

In *Praying with Celtic Saints*, Mary Earle and Sylvia Maddox tell how Brigit founded the great monastery at Kildare in Ireland:

Here both men and women received her guidance and leadership as abbess and soul friend. She was recognised in all of Ireland as one aflame with the intensity of Christ's love for the poor. Her spiritual discernment was manifest in seeing even the smallest needs of another's body and soul. She practised a ministry of hospitality, welcoming one and all in the name of Christ.

Brigit honoured and lived out the tradition of having an *anam cara*, or soul friend. Her life was typified by a profound sense of Christ's friendship with us, a sense that is foundational to Christian soul friendship. In the Irish tradition, the earthly soul friend was always accompanied by heavenly soul friends. Those holy souls who had entered the gates of eternity were perceived to be alive in Christ and readily accessible to those on earth. Because the soul friends of the community of saints were always present to the faithful, Christians were perceived as being never alone, no matter what the circumstances.

Brigit was known to have guided both men and women in their spiritual journey. She served both as a mentor and guide, but most of all as companion along the way. One recognises a soul friend by the hospitality she or he offers in accepting one's deepest thoughts and aspirations. The soul friend honours the secrets of the heart and gently nudges one's dreams into being.

It is in soul friendship that one discovers the presence of Christ. When Jesus says that whenever two or three are gathered in his name, he will be with them, we see the true meaning of soul friendship. Soul friendship can extend beyond geographic time and space. A soul friend may be someone we encounter in our reading or in our prayer. Brigit herself continues to minister to those who seek her companionship and guidance. She is especially a soul friend to those who seek to make holy the ordinary tasks of life.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

1. It can be hard "to make holy the ordinary tasks of life," whether at home at work or on pilgrimage. St Ignatius encourages us "to find God in all things". God is present but "the trick is to be aware of it." So Ignatius encourages us at the end of each day to pray to God's Spirit to be with me, bringing me to awareness. Then take time to look back over the day, examining our thoughts and our feelings, becoming more aware of the Lord. Reflect on such things as - the events of the day, the people we met, encountering God in the midst of God's creation, what was happening within myself (my senses, feelings, thoughts, prayer). How was God present in these circumstances of my life today? You may wish to focus on one or two. Finally take time to reflect on tomorrow, commending that coming day to God.
2. *Praying with Celtic Saints* suggests the following exercise: " Sometimes we are called to be a soul friend to someone seeking guidance. Who do you feel is calling you to be a soul friend? Which of the following qualities do you think you could offer? In which area do you desire more growth? – compassion, humility, wisdom, truthfulness, prayerfulness, generosity."
3. "One recognises a soul friend by the hospitality he or she offers in accepting one's deepest thoughts and aspirations." Reflect on your experience of people who have given you this gift. Offer a prayer of thanks.
4. Brigit "practised a ministry of Christian hospitality, welcoming one and all in the name of Christ". She was particularly known for her compassion for the poor and those in need. Remembering too

our Lord's ministry to those on 'the edge', reflect on your friendships with those in need and on the margins of society. What have you gained from such friendships?

### **Day 5: Relationships with the Aborigines of the Centre and their sacred land .**

The Rainbow Spirit Elders, *Rainbow Spirit Theology*. Harper Collins Religious.

The early Celtic peoples were a rural people who had a great sense of the presence of God in creation. Esther De Waal writes in her book *The Celtic Way of Prayer*: "I have found in the Celtic a world view that touches on much which is common, shared, perhaps archetypical, in all human experience. I have become aware of how this way of seeing the world is common to all early peoples, to the traditional and aboriginal peoples throughout the world... This discovery of my own Celtic roots has meant that I have also become more aware of the riches of many other traditional peoples."

So the Rainbow Spirit Elders write:

The camping of Christ among us is a reality we Aboriginal people must face boldly. We have been strongly influenced by many Christian missionaries who emphasised that Christ is located first and foremost in cathedrals, churches or in European communities of faith. Missionaries and European pastors gave the impression they were bringing Christ with them to our camps as a special favour. Their attitude was usually paternalistic.

But Christ as the life-giving power of the Creator Spirit has been camping among us since the beginning. Now that we understand the Creator Spirit has camped with us in a special way, assuming human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, we need to claim Christ as one of us, as Aboriginal. And we need to declare that the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ are not only acts of history in a distant land, but living realities in our land. Christ suffers, dies and rises among us. (p.66-67)

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now' (Romans 8:22). We Aboriginal people of Australia have experienced the suffering of the land personally. We understand the land's bondage to the sins and evil forces imposed by many European invaders. We know the land has been sinned against. And we groan with the land as it, too, longs to be free of its bondage.

We believe, however, not only that Christ suffers with the land and our people, but that Christ can overcome the evils which enslave the land. The Christ who suffers is also the Christ who redeems and frees the land. Christ, who is the power of the Creator Spirit in human form, comes to free the both our people and the land so that both can begin to live as the Creator Spirit intended. (p.68)

### **Suggestions**

1. "This discovery of my own Celtic roots has meant that I have also become more aware of the riches of many other traditional peoples." Is this true for you? You might like to write in your journal of the "spiritual riches" that you see as common to both Celtic and Aboriginal Australians.
2. The theme for this instalment is finding spiritual meaning in relationships. Reflect back over your own relationships with Aboriginal people. How has God spoken to you in your relationships with Aboriginal friends?
3. Perhaps living in urban Australia has meant that you have had very little contact or none at all with Aborigines. What are your feelings as you anticipate meeting Aborigines in the Centre? Bring these feelings to God in prayer.
4. Uluru is a sacred site for Australian Aboriginal people. In Celtic understanding it could be described as 'a thin place', a place where heaven and earth, where the spiritual and the material come together. As you look towards the pilgrimage to the Centre, what thoughts and feelings come up for you in relation to the visit to Uluru?
5. Read and reflect on Romans 8: 18-27. Is there a particular phrase or sentence in this passage in which the Spirit of God speaks especially to your heart?

## **Day 6: Pilgrimage – A time to deepen our relationship with God.**

Ray Simpson, *Exploring Celtic Spirituality*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1995

“Three Irishmen came to king Alfred in a boat without any oars from Ireland, whence they had stolen away because they wished to go on pilgrimage for the love of God they cared not where.” Those three monks were among the great number who for over a period of 500 years set out to wander across the face of Europe, from Iceland to Italy. They left homeland and friends, and all life’s securities, in order that they might set out into the unknown, a journey for God.” (p.45) The Irish monks, writes Shirley Toulson, “seem to have taken the words of the second century Irenaeus literally when he defined the true search for God as starting from *apavia* (roadlessness), a state of complete trust in the direction of God rather than of a human decision.” “I am always moving from the day of birth to the day of death,” said Columbanus.

The ideal of many of these Celts was “to seek the places of one’s resurrection”. This form of permanent exile from one’s family, to pass one’s life in solitude, was a feature of the anchorites, who had a rule of life but who were solitaries. The influence of these people who harnessed a natural wanderlust to God, can hardly be overestimated.

Ray Simpson suggests that each one of us needs to identify in our own lives any place where we have given up thinking that change may come, and to seek God’s guidance on how we can move on... We are tempted to go the known ways, the safe ways, basking in the achievements perhaps of forefathers in the faith, not replenishing spiritually or materially the capital they left to us.

He tells the story of Archdeacon Michael Handley who realised that he was being asked by the diocesan machine to do twenty-three sessions a week on diocesan business. Yet an inner voice was saying, “All sessions belong to me and only twelve belong to the organisation as a matter of routine.” Archdeacon Handley then went on a cycling pilgrimage through France to Santiago de Compostella. It took many days. A woman who asked him how long it took reflected: “That’s quite right. The nearer the centre you are the more you ought to do this sort of thing.” So now the archdeacon sets time aside to do “useless things” (none of the twenty-three sessions were to do useless things), to learn to play with time, to waste time for God; to kill the mentality of control. Once when he was on the way to a busy agenda, an inner voice said, “Call at this house”. It turned out that that a man had just died there. The archdeacon was able to help and pray with the relatives – then left to carry on his business. But if he had not learned to set aside time for ‘useless things’, he would never have heard the inner voice.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

1. ‘To learn to play with time, to waste time for God, to kill the mentality of control.’ Is this something you find difficult to do? Reflect on ways in which you might waste time with God.
1. ‘The nearer the centre you are the more you ought to do this sort of thing.’ Write in your journal how this journey to ‘the Centre’, might help in your journey to your centre in God.
2. Reflect on this prayer. Is there a particular part of the prayer that speaks to your heart?  
Lead me from that which binds to that which frees;  
Lead me from that which cramps to that which creates,  
Lead me from that which lies to that which speaks truth,  
Lead me from that which blights to that which enobles,  
Lead me from that which hides to that which celebrates;  
Lead me from that which fades to that which endures. (Ray Simpson.)
3. Read and reflect on Genesis 12: 1-9.

## **Day 7: Some journeying prayers.**

Esther De Waal, *The Celtic Way of Prayer*, Hodder and Stoughton. 1996.

A poem attributed to St. Columba.

The path I walk, Christ walks it. May the land in which I am be without sorrow.  
May the Trinity protect me wherever I stay, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Bright angels walk with me – dear presence – in every dealing.  
In every dealing I pray them that no one’s poison may reach me.  
The ninefold people of heaven of holy cloud, the tenth force of the stone earth.

Favourable company, they come with me, so that the Lord may not be angry with me.  
May I arrive at every place, may I return home; may the way in which I spend be a way  
without loss.  
May every path before me be smooth, man woman and child welcome me.  
A truly good journey! Well does the fair Lord show us a course, a path.

A journey blessing which come from Mary MacDonald, a crofter on South Ulst.

God be with thee in every pass, Jesus be with thee on every hill,  
Spirit be with thee on every stream, headland and ridge and lawn;

Each sea and land, each moor and meadow,  
Each lying down, each rising up,  
In the trough of the waves, on the crest of the billows,  
Each step of the journey thou goest.

A mother's blessing to her children.

The joy of Christ in thy face, joy to all who see thee,  
The circle of God around thy neck,  
Angels of God shielding thee, Angels of God shielding thee.  
Joy of night and day be thine, joy of sun and moon be thine,  
Joy of men and women be thine,  
Each land and see thou goest, Each land and sea thou goest.

Be every season happy for thee, be every season bright for thee,  
Be every season glad for thee, And the Son of Mary Virgin at peace with thee,  
The Son of Mary Virgin at peace with thee.

Be thine the compassing of the God of life,  
Be thine the compassing of the Christ of love,  
Be thine the compassing of the Spirit of grace,  
To befriend thee and to aid thee,  
Thou beloved one of my heart."

A very short journey blessing to be recited as we travel.

Bless to me ,O God, the earth beneath my foot,  
Bless to me, O God, the path whereon I go."

Or again,

I on thy path O God,  
Thou O God, in my steps."

## Suggestions

1. St. Columba writes " the path I walk Christ walks it". Those who recommend the spiritual value of pilgrimage remind us  
*To go to Rome, Is much of trouble, little of profit; The King whom thou seekest there,  
Unless thou bring Him with thee, thou wilt not find.*
2. Give thanks for the presence of Christ within you on the journey and seek his presence and support as you prepare for and then begin the journey.
3. The Celts are very aware of the Trinity in their prayers and blessings. The mystery of the Trinity reminds us that God is indeed relational – that God in community is the very heart of the divine nature. You might like to write your own journeying prayer for the pilgrimage to the Centre, focussing around the mystery of the triune nature of God.
4. *The love Christ Jesus gave, be filling every heart for me, The love Christ Jesus gave, Filling me for everyone.* Pray for a deep infilling of Christ's love to all whom you meet – your fellow pilgrims and those whom you will meet on the journey and in 'the Centre.'
5. Esther De Waal writes " the strong sense of creation and the presence of the Creator, of the ministry that binds together heaven and earth, of men and women and the non human, is something to which I am drawn back time and again, and for which I am profoundly grateful." (p.21 *The Celtic Way of Prayer*). Give thanks for this wonderfully interconnected web of life of which we are a part. Perhaps you might like to write a poem that expresses the wonder of this relationship and interconnection that you will experience as you journey with your fellow pilgrims to 'the Centre.'