

**Friday, September 5, 2008**

Dear Friends,

This will be my first correspondence to Nativity since we arrived in Scotland. As I am sending this on the weekend, I imagine you will receive it on Monday, September 8<sup>th</sup>.

Virginia and I arrived here on Friday, August 30<sup>th</sup>, after flying from Indy to Edinburgh by way of Chicago and London. We spent the night in Edinburgh as I could not imagine a couple of hours drive after the overnight flight. I especially could not imagine driving to a place I had never been – and driving on the wrong (i.e. left) side of the road – not to mention sitting in the wrong seat.

On Saturday, we drove to Lindisfarne, which is just over the border in England. Lindisfarne, or Holy Island as it is often called, is off the east coast of England in the North Sea. It is a tidal island connected to the mainland by a causeway. The causeway is covered by approximately six feet of water at high tide, which means the island is cut off twice a day. Luckily, we arrived just at a time we could get on the island. While I knew it was a tidal island, I had not thought very much about what time the tides would be. While I just said we were lucky, I really believe we were blessed in arriving at the right time

The population of the island is about 120 people – adults and children. There are a couple of small hotels on the island, as well as a number of Bed and Breakfasts. There are three restaurants (all of which have a pub or bar). There are also several cafés for lunch, particularly for the tourists who come and go from the island in the middle of the day. You cannot stay too late in the day or you might get stuck for the night.

Virginia and I attended the Sunday Eucharist at St. Mary's Parish Church on Lindisfarne. The service was very much like our Rite 2 Eucharist. This was the Feast of St. Aidan who founded the first church and monastery on the island and in this area of England in 635 A.D. In observance of his feast day, we walked the bounds of the parish (which is the village) stopping to pray at several points, and then had a blessing of the island. I also attended the Morning Prayer and Eucharist the other mornings we were there.

After just one day on the island we decided to extend our stay on Lindisfarne for another day – and thankfully our room was available for another night. The peacefulness of the island was always evident, but especially when the tourists left the island with the incoming tide. The tides provide a rhythm to life on the island. The rhythm involves both activity and peace and quiet. Part of my reflection was the need we have for finding an appropriate rhythm for our lives – a rhythm that allows us to encounter God in our daily lives.

On Monday we visited three of the Border Abbeys in Borders Area of Scotland. These were abbeys that were part of the expansion of Christianity into this area of Scotland and England. On

Tuesday and Wednesday we stayed on the island. Virginia and I walked the island and at times just appreciated the quiet and peace. One afternoon we walked to the dunes on the North Sea. We did not see another person for almost 2 hours. We did see 30-35 seals swimming in the North Sea. I believe Lindisfarne is one of the holiest places I have encountered – perhaps because of the rhythm and peace that is so tangible.

We traveled from Lindisfarne to St. Andrews, Scotland on Thursday. I am continually surprised by how long it takes to drive in this area. The roads are good – but they are not interstates, at least to the places we have been. It seems to take twice as long as I expect. Virginia said today that it seems the time is double miles to be traveled, i.e. it takes an hour to go 30 miles. You can get from one place to another – but not as quick as we are used to (but much faster than what Mother Ellen encountered in the Sudan).

Today we spent the morning exploring St. Andrews. I think we are some of the few people that are not here to play golf. This afternoon we visited St. Fillian's Cave. St. Fillian was a 7<sup>th</sup> Century monk, perhaps a hermit since he was living in an isolated cave. He was one of the monks that brought the Gospel to this area of Scotland. The cave was where he lived while he carried out his evangelistic ministry. The cave is now cared for by the small Episcopal Church of Scotland parish that is nearby.

I keep all of you at Nativity in my prayers as I visit the variety of holy places we encounter. This coming week I will especially be praying for your upcoming workshop with Diana Butler Bass.

Peace,

Bruce +