

Report- Tuesday 9/23

Dear Friends,

We settled into St. Deniol's Library on Sunday night after driving to Wales from Scotland - about 5 hours of driving. We will be here for five nights - which should be more restful after traveling two out of the past three days.

Before our car was robbed I had written some thoughts about prayer – but, unfortunately, they were on my laptop which was stolen. I have tried to re-write my thoughts - so if you think this is good, I must have remembered most of my thoughts. If it is not very good - I assure you the first one was better☺

I find that traveling for more than a few days makes it hard for me to keep track of what day of the week it is - much less what day of the month. I've not read a newspaper, dated a letter or written a check to remind me of the date. Truthfully, most of the time the day of the week doesn't matter too much - as long as we are in the right location.

We arrived in Inverness (where I originally wrote my thoughts) on a Sunday evening. I could remember going to church in St. Andrews Sunday morning, so I knew what day it was. On Monday morning it was time to do laundry. While Virginia sat in the launderette, I walked to St. Andrews Cathedral, the cathedral of the diocese of the Episcopal Church of Scotland in this area. I saw on the posted schedule that Morning Prayer was at 7:00 a.m. I decided I would go to the Cathedral for Morning Prayer since I had been saying Morning Prayer in our bedroom since leaving Lindisfarne.

On Tuesday morning I got up at 6:30 a.m. so I could be at the Cathedral by 7:00 a.m. I got to the cathedral and it was dark and locked up tight. I walked all the way around the cathedral but there was not a sign of another person. Finally, I checked the posted schedule to make sure I hadn't gotten the time wrong. Well, I had the time right. It was then that I realized the schedule indicated that Morning Prayer was Monday, Wednesday and Friday - and this was Tuesday. The day before it had not mattered what day it was - but it sure did that morning.

Since I was up I decided to walk around Inverness watching the city wake up. (Actually, I was looking for a place to get a cup of coffee. Also, since I had my prayer book with me, I planned to say Morning Prayer wherever I found some coffee.) As I walked around, gradually there were more people, more cars and more buses (yes Scotland has buses that run on a frequent schedule). Finally, I came to a McDonald's (the golden arches are everywhere) and I went in for coffee and Morning Prayer.

Since I have been on this clergy renewal leave I have said Morning Prayer in a variety of places: in a monastery chapel and on the house porch (in Michigan), in a parish church and the ruins of a priory (in Lindisfarne) and frequently in our bedroom. I know we can pray anywhere. However, we often seek a place of peace and quiet to pray. We want to limit our distractions to help us focus on our prayers.

That Tuesday, I was reading the scripture lessons and praying in McDonald's (I did refrain from reading out loud). As I prayed, the McDonald's became busier and busier. I found myself praying for the people I saw - the young man waiting on everyone, the young woman probably going to work and the business man who hurried in and out.

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Where we pray affects the way we pray and what we pray about. In McDonald's, I became aware in my prayers of the people and the city around me. Last week Virginia and I were with the Iona Community learning about their ministry and work. I'll talk more about the Iona Community when we return. One aspect of the Iona Community that they feel strongly about is that worship and work go hand in hand. Our group leader talked about how the craftsmen, as they worked to rebuild Iona Abbey, would come to morning prayers with their tools in hand. Then, they would immediately go to work when the prayers were finished - without sitting down or taking a moment of quiet as we often do. Prayer and work flowed together.

We need the peace and quiet for prayer at times. We need it in order to center ourselves and quiet our hectic lives. We also need to carry prayer into the world - to energize the life around us with our prayers, and allow our prayers to be formed by where we are praying. Morning Prayer in McDonald's was a good reminder for me of the connection between prayer, our life and our work.

Now, it is back to the quiet of St. Deniol's Library.

Peace,  
Bruce