

Dear Friends,

This part of the clergy renewal leave (the travel to Scotland, Wales, the Holy Land and Greece) is coming to a close. This afternoon we will travel from the Greek Island of Mykonos to Athens by ferry - about a five hour ride. We will then have two nights in Athens before we travel back to Indianapolis.

These four days on Mykonos were designed as a rest period within the renewal leave - and they have been. While we walked into town one day, there has not been hiking like in the Holy Land, or even the walking like we did in Scotland and Wales. We rented a 4-wheeler for a couple of days to get around on the island (that of course was another adventure). Even my reading changed as I started the first novel I've read since we arrived in Scotland - taking a break from Celtic spirituality and Biblical studies.

The physical exertion and the pace has not been as rigorous as the previous weeks. In the previous weeks we got up anywhere from 4:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. - and here we have been able to sleep to 8:00 a.m. This week has been a time for reflection, as Virginia and I have talked regularly about various aspect of this trip.

Each portion of the trip has had special meaning - the stillness and peace of Lindisfarne, the worship in the Abbey on Iona, the time of study at St. Deniol's Library, following the way of the pilgrims to St. David's in the south of Wales and finally hiking through the Holy Land. Each step has been renewing and refreshing in its own way. I know I will be integrating this into my spiritual life and ministry for many weeks and months - and I expect some events will keep coming back to me for years and/or the rest of my life.

After we get back to Indianapolis, I will have three more weeks of the renewal period. During this time I will be traveling to Washington, D.C. (where I visit the Church of the Epiphany where Dorothy Butler Bass attends) and Denver Colorado. In both of these cities I will be visiting churches to learn of their "best practices" that help them be active, vital parishes. The final week will be spent on retreat in the desert of New Mexico.

While these final three weeks of the renewal leave remain, I am beginning to look forward to being back to Nativity. You have not been out of my thoughts and prayers as a parish and as individuals. The real break has been from the day-to-day activities and ministry of the parish. I have been able to lay these aside for awhile - which is what is intended in the renewal leave. I will be pleased to be back at Nativity on Sunday, November 16, and joining in worship with our parish on that day.

Peace,
Bruce +