

## Aidan's Way Day 12

# Celtic Creativity and Prayer

Thank you for joining me in prayer on this the twelfth day of my three-week pilgrimage from Iona to Lindisfarne. Over the next three days, I'll be digging a little deeper into the life of Aidan in whose footsteps I am walking, exploring the ways in which he modelled each one of our six practices at the heart of Lectio 365. These are prayer and creativity, justice and hospitality, learning and mission. <sup>1</sup>

(Want to know more about this unique series on pilgrimage? Check out the special introductory day, "An Introduction to Pilgrimage").

## Pause

*As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly,  
to re-centre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.*

Pause and pray

## Prayer of Approach

*High King of Heaven, would You walk with me and talk with me as I seek to follow in the footsteps of Your servant Aidan today? I have set my heart on pilgrimage, so challenge me and change me, cleanse and rearrange me, until the fire that burned in Aidan's heart, burns brightly in mine.*

# Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's extravagant creativity today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 8:

When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—  
the moon and the stars you set in place—  
what are mere mortals that you should think about them,  
human beings that you should care for them?  
Yet you made them only a little lower than God  
and crowned them with glory and honour.  
O LORD, our LORD, your majestic name fills the earth!

**Psalm 8:3-5,9 (NLT)**

## Pause and pray

God's creativity is displayed all around me as I walk, and so is human creativity too. Yesterday I watched The Falkirk Wheel lifting canal boats 27 metres into the air by balancing the weight of a descending gondola with that of the ascending one using almost no electricity. Before that I crossed Scotland's longest aqueduct, towering almost 30 metres above the River Avon. And so today, as I think about creativity, I turn to the Bible where Moses is commissioning a craftsman for the tabernacle...

Moses said to the people of Israel, "See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft. And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, or by a weaver—by any sort of workman or skilled designer.

**Exodus 35:30-35 (ESVUK)**

The first person in the Bible described as being filled with the Spirit of God was not a prophet, priest, or king, but Bezalel, a multi-talented artisan-craftsman whose job it was to make the tabernacle beautiful. Aidan would have understood this well because Celtic society ranked bards and poets second only to tribal chiefs. Aidan's spiritual home on Iona had been planted by a poet, and its monks spent countless hours transcribing and illuminating the Scriptures with brightly coloured inks, ornate iconography, and intricate knotwork. This was in itself an act of worship and prayer. Later generations would carve Bible stories in towering crosses. Both Iona and Lindisfarne would eventually bequeath to the world two of the greatest treasures in all antiquity: *The Book of Kells* and *The Lindisfarne Gospels*.<sup>2</sup>

# Ask

How might I celebrate God's creativity in the coming day? It could be in the clothes I choose to wear, or the music I choose to play. In cooking, gardening, or journaling. I ask the Holy Spirit to fill me now to inspire my creativity.

**Pause and pray**

Thinking now of someone working in a creative industry, I ask the Holy Spirit to fill them today, 'with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship.' (Exod. 35:31)

**Pause and pray**

# Yield

***As I return to the passage, I activate my imagination, noticing the colours, textures and materials described...***

Moses said to the people of Israel, "See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft. And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, or by a weaver—by any sort of workman or skilled designer.

**Exodus 35:30–35 (ESVUK)**

Bezalel's gift of creativity was not an end in itself but a means to an end: God's greater glory. And here we have the link between creativity, the first practice I'm exploring today, and the second practice of prayer. I see creativity and worship, praise and prayer intertwined in so much of the world's greatest art, from *The Book of Kells* in ninth century Scotland, to the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in sixteenth century Rome, and John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* in twentieth century New Jersey. It is said of Columba, the founder of Iona Abbey, that he 'could not spend even a single hour without attending to prayer' but alongside this he was also a poet whose work is still read today. We see a similar prayerfulness in his spiritual son Aidan who certainly sung the Psalms from memory as he walked this way 1400 years ago. Prayer and creativity are intertwined, inseparable in the lives of Christians down the ages.

**Pause and pray**

## Yielding Prayer

*May I live this day  
Compassionate of heart,  
Clear in word,  
Gracious in awareness,  
Courageous in thought,  
Generous in love<sup>3</sup>*

## Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who made me and loves me says to me in Ephesians:

You are my masterpiece. I have created you anew in Christ Jesus, so you can do the good things I planned for you long ago.

**Personalised from Eph. 2:10 (NLT)**

## Closing Prayer

***Father, help me to live this day to the full,  
being true to You, in every way.  
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,  
being kind to everyone I meet.  
Spirit, help me to love the lost,  
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.  
Amen.***

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<sup>1</sup>You can follow Pete's pilgrimage and hear the occasional song inspired by the journey on 'The Pilgrim Podcast' available at [www.PeteGreig.info](http://www.PeteGreig.info).

<sup>2</sup>Learn more at <https://www.nts.org.uk/stories/the-book-of-kells>; <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/lindisfarne-gospels>

<sup>3</sup>John O'Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings* (Colorado Springs, CO: Convergent Books, 2008).