

## Pilgrimage Postcard- Sarah Colver

2.8.20

As many of you know, the Northumberland coastline is a favourite 'haunt' of mine for me, both for holidays and for retreats. When Aran was younger it was a good compromise holiday destination as we'd alternate 'castle days' for him with 'beach days' for me. When I go there on my own, I can spend the whole time by the sea - or in it.

Why Northumberland? It's something to do with the wildness of the region, and the broad expansiveness of the scenery; it's still pretty quiet out of season and I can walk for hours without seeing many people at all. On those beaches I feel open and free, more in touch with the elements; and as I sit and watch the sea I can experience more of the vastness and depth of the love of God – and being held within it, being part of it. Those beaches, places where the land and sea meet, are liminal in more than one way for me.

There's something else too that draws me back to that particular region, and that's the stories of the holy people of the past - the Northern Saints. Holy Island still feels like a sacred place despite the tourists, and the landscapes and the local beaches are those which Aidan, Cuthbert and others walked among too. I can often sympathise with Cuthbert's wish to be alone in the Farne islands rather than become a bishop.

Often I will book a small self catering cottage and do my own thing entirely; but for my photo I chose Alnmouth beach, below the Friary where I've stayed on retreat twice now. There, I find that the pattern of regular offices, the daily Eucharist and communal meal times creates a structured 'safe space' in which I still have time to go for walks and sit on the beach in personal contemplation – but being at the Friary reminds me that I also need to be fed physically, emotionally and spiritually in community.

It is indeed a place of abundance.