

My Pilgrim Place

When I started to think about where my Pilgrim place would be, I wanted to focus on where I have felt most peaceful. Peacefulness – or silence – often makes me feel scared. But, ironically, it is that very fear that also often allows me to open up to God, and to feel healed as a result. I have visited Holy Island twice in my life and both times the serenity of that place is inescapable. It seems to just embody it. And for me a key part of this is the nature of the sea. I have always felt drawn to water – and the sea in particular. Holy Island presents you with a very particular perspective on it, largely because of the nature of the tides.

When I stand by the causeway, I am spellbound by the beauty of them. They have a natural rhythm that is almost hypnotic. They come and go so gently and at first appear to make no difference to the sand below my feet. Then all of a sudden I feel the water in amongst my toes, the contrast of the setting, but still warm, sun on my skin with the coolness of the gentle sea covering my feet. And before you know it, the causeway is hidden beneath the waves and you are cut off from the mainland.

There is a combination of danger and security here. Nature cannot be stopped – although there still continue to be a number of drivers who find themselves caught with water all around them, believing they could drive fast enough to get to the other side before the tide comes in. Nature is not that forgiving. And I find comfort in that. That here there is something humanity cannot control. Something we have to respect. The waves will never stop. The rhythm is not created by us. It is there in spite of us. And it gives me an opportunity to surrender. To let myself go, forget the busyness of the world, and observe the beginning, middle and end, the eternity of something bigger than us. In this I can feel alone, and yet connected to the world and to God in a way I cannot experience anywhere else.