

The Miracles: Death and Restoration to Life



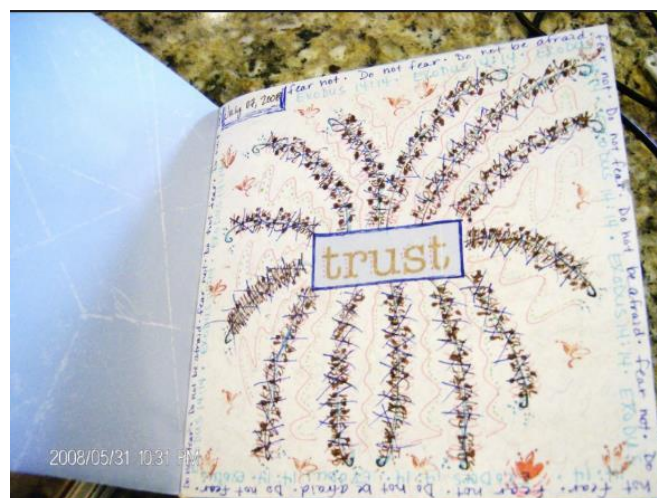
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The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins began writing a dramatised poem about St Winefride although it was never finished and only fragments of the writing remain. In one section of the poem, he gives St Beuno a monologue as the saint looks forward into the future and sees in his mind's eye what Winefride's death and restoration to life, and the establishment of the holy well, will mean for people yet to come:

*As long as men are mortal and God merciful,
So long to this sweet spot, this leafy lean-over,
This Dry Dene, now no longer dry nor dumb, but moist and musical
With the uproll and the downcarol of day and night delivering
Water, which keeps thy name, (for not in rock written,
But in pale water, frail water, wild rash and reeling water,
That will not wear a print, that will not stain a pen,
Thy venerable record, virgin, is recorded).
Here to this holy well shall pilgrimages be,
And not from purple Wales only nor from elmy England,
But from beyond seas, Erin, France and Flanders, everywhere,
Pilgrims, still pilgrims, móre pílgrims, still more poor pilgrims.*
(St Winefred's Well, Fragment C, ll. 10-14, 18-23)

Many people from different churches make pilgrimages to Jerusalem or to Galilee. It can be humbling and amazing to walk in the same places Jesus walked and to think about him performing miracles and healing people in those places, changing lives for ever. Similarly, people are drawn to other places of miracle because of the sense of awe and wonder in God's power and love that they can feel there.

- Do some research and find out about places where miracles are supposed to take place, or 'thin places' where people might go to feel close to God. See if you can find one near to where you live and go for a visit. Otherwise, why not just visit a local church (or a church you don't normally visit) and see what about it speaks to you of a living faith.
- How would you start a conversation about miracles? How might telling the story of St Winefride and the holy well create a good framework for talking about faith?
- Miracles and prayer are closely related. People pray for something to change, - perhaps for help, or healing, or direction. How might God answer our prayers, but in a different way from what we expected?
- Many people pray in words, write down what they want to say and leave it at a particular place, or they might light a candle. But there are lots of other ways to pray, - creating visual prayers in a drawing or sewing, or painting a pebble, or singing or chanting or playing an instrument. Some people like to create visual prayers which show what is being prayed for but leave spaces to show how God has responded afterwards, so the prayer is completed later, possibly much later. Why not have a go at doing prayer differently?



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