

Rev. Alanna Sullivan: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Rev. Sullivan: And welcome to morning prayers. Today's service will begin with the responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter book. Psalm selection number 23 found on page 12. Please stand as you are able as we read responsively by full verse.

Rev. Sullivan: The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.

Congregation: He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside still waters.

Rev. Sullivan: He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in straight paths for his name's sake.

Congregation: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

Rev. Sullivan: Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou hast anointed my head with oil. My cup runneth over.

Congregation: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Congregation: (singing)

Prof. Stephanie Paulsell: How beautiful. Thank you. A reading from Psalm 84. "Happy are those whose strength is in you and whose heart are the highways to Zion." A few years ago, my sister and I decided to make a pilgrimage from the ruined Abbey of Melrose and the Scottish borderlands to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne off the Northeast coast of England. It would take us through the hills and fields, over Roman roads and also across an ancient Pilgrim path, crossable only at low tide over the sands that separate the Holy Island from the rest of England. We wanted to put our feet in the same salty mud in which earlier Pilgrims had walked.

Prof. Paulsell: Our Pilgrim route was dedicated to Saint Cuthbert, a seventh century holy man, known for his pastoral care, his love of solitude and his deep affinity with the world around him. After standing all night to pray, waist deep in the cold North Sea, the story goes, the otters followed him out of the water and breathed their warm breath on his feet. Cuthbert loved his island monastery, but he also loved to wander beyond it. Crossing the sands when the tide was out, going from village to village preaching and offering pastoral care. Even when he was at home on Lindisfarne, he would sometimes make his pastoral care part of his worship, praying and singing the psalms as he walked around the island, pausing to ask people how they were getting along even after he died and the Vikings destroyed his Abbey his brokenhearted monks carried his body around Britain for a decade. Cuthbert was a saint on the move in death and in life.

Prof. Paulsell: And so at the end of May of 2017 my sister and I met at Melrose Abbey to follow him and our pilgrimage took us up and over the hills where Cuthbert had watched over sheep as a boy and into woods, so still and quiet that it was easy to imagine him falling in love with silence there.

Prof. Paulsell: Some days the only living creatures with whom we shared the path were sheep and cows. Other days we experienced the sweetness of what the anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner called *communitas*. The intimacy that can arise among strangers on the road when we are all freed from the social hierarchies that structure our lives at home. But mostly it was just my sister and me, walking side by side or single file, talking or silent spending more time together than we had since we were children growing up in the same house. Our pilgrimage was not only a journey into Cuthbert's life, but our own. A journey into childhood as old memories awakened and a journey into each other's present lives as gradually the things dearest to us worked their way up into our conversation.

Prof. Paulsell: My sister has spent her life working with and for refugees, particularly the children who make it to our Southern border unaccompanied, and she brought their concerns along with her. "Imagine" she would say, as we struggled up the hill, "if we had to walk 20 miles today instead of 10. Imagine if there weren't a bed waiting for us at the end of the day. Imagine if there were predators along our route. Imagine if we didn't know how our journey would end." Her pilgrimage was a prayer. Every step, and I tried to follow in the path that she made.

Prof. Paulsell: Saint Cuthbert's way is very well-marked, but my sister and I did occasionally get lost. We'd get to talking and miss a sign and have to stop and figure out where we were. Sometimes we got lost and flashes of our childhood selves would appear. The little sister who wanted the big one to slow down until we could figure out where we were. The older one who was convinced she knew what she was doing, even when she didn't.

Prof. Paulsell: We had a map of the trail and a book that described the route and we often needed both of them to reorient ourselves as well as consultation with other pilgrims on the road and once an assist from Saint Cuthbert himself. Ask me about that later. My sister would unfold the map and try to locate where we might be. I would read from the descriptions in the book and we'd compare them until something clicked, until we realized we had walked through the wrong gate or skirted around a stand of trees that we should have entered.

Prof. Paulsell: "This is how we're going to have to navigate from now on," my sister said to me one day as one of us spread out the map and the other one read out loud from the book in an attempt to figure out where we were. I thought she meant that she was tired of me trying to feel my way along when we got lost. She was tired of that, but that's not what she meant. She meant that this is how we're going to have to navigate the life of our country, our lives as citizens. "We're going to

have to stop and consult each other frequently along the way," she said. "We're going to need our maps and our books, our scriptures and histories, our hymns and prayers, the wisdom of our community, a vision of where we should be heading and a plan of how to get there. You can't just hope for the best," she said. Our choices about which way to turn are really going to matter.

- Prof. Paulsell: On the seventh day of our pilgrimage, we reached the sea and we saw the holy island across the water with dunes at one end and the ruins of Lindisfarne Priory at the other. Tall poles marked out the ancient Pilgrim path through the ocean and two refuges up on stilts waited for any pilgrims who might get stuck out there at high tide. As we waited for the tide to withdraw, a fog rolled in obscuring the poles and the island, covering the sands with a thick mist. But we'd seen where we were going and that filled our minds. We looked behind us hopefully. We could see some figures coming to the distance and we hoped they'd want to walk out under the sands with us. We took off our shoes and we waited.
- Rev. Sullivan: Let us pray. God, we don't know where the road of our lives is heading, but we will encounter one another along the way. Open our hearts that we might see your spirit moving between us and through us as we encounter ourselves as we encounter one another and it's we encountered you along the road. Amen.
- Rev. Sullivan: And will you please join me in saying the Lord's Prayer. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.
- Rev. Sullivan: Please stand as you are able to sing the hymn Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise. Hymn number 203, found in your crimson covered hymnal.
- Congregation: (singing)
- Rev. Sullivan: As we go into this day, may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious onto you and may the Lord grant you peace. And the gathered people said-
- Congregation: Amen.