

Celtic Christian Spirituality
February 24, 2021
Introduction

Opening Prayer

Participant Introductions

Zoom Protocols

Who were/are the Celts?

(see attached handout)

Overview of Book: Celtic Christian Spirituality; Essential Writings – Annotate & Explained by Mary C. Earle

Forward by John Phillip Newell

- In the Celtic Christian world, heaven and earth are not divided. Spirit and matter are woven together inseparably. The life of one species and the life of another are never torn apart. The well-being of humanity is viewed in relationship to the well-being of the rest of earth's species. And the health of the individual is not severed from the health of the community. The one and the many belong together. The microcosm and the macrocosm are one. Time and eternity are wedded. pg ix
- ...she keeps pointing to Celtic Christianity's gift for today, it's vision of interbeing. pg ix

Introduction

- Learning to love God, our neighbor and ourselves is a life-long journey in which our awareness of the ways in which we are knit together calls the status quo into question. pg 2
- Criteria for included texts: 1) The texts illustrate some aspect of the Celtic Christian tradition; 2) The texts provoke reflection and prayer; and 3) The texts lead to a deepening desire for personal and communal transformation. pg 3

Sources for the Book and Context

St. Patrick of Ireland pg 4

- Excerpts from his *Confession* and his *Letter to Coroticus*
- Born in Brittany, he spent several years as a slave after being kidnapped by Irish slavers
- As a result (of his time in servitude), his mature theology denounces any attempt to own or destroy another human being

Pelagius pgs 4-6

- Pelagius and his followers, ...clearly believed that God became human in Jesus to show us what being truly human would look like and to declare that the image of God could never be completely eradicated, because God is the one who fashions humanity in God's image.
- Because all matter has a divine origin, we have a sacred duty to care for the earth and for one another, and to share equitably the gifts we have been given.

John Scotus Eriugena pgs 6-9

- A ninth-century Irish teacher, Eriugena offers us theology that is both deeply influenced by the early theologians of the Christian east and true to his Irish roots.
- Eriugena offers us a theology that remembers that everything is one in Christ, because "without him not one thing came into being" (John 1:3). That oneness *is*. It is not our task to create the oneness. God in Christ, though the Holy Spirit, is the author of the oneness.
- From the point of view of Eriugena, when we hurt another person, when we engage in war, when we refuse to honor the common good, we are desecrating the very life of God, present and vital within all that God has spoken into being.

The Carmina Gadelica pgs 9-10

- Prayers from The Carmina Gadelica, a six-volume collection of poems, hymns, charms, songs, and incantations compiled by Andrew Carmichael around the end of the nineteenth century are strongly represented in this collection of texts.
- It also continues to inform modern writers of prayer and liturgy, such as John Philip Newell and authors in the Iona Community.

George MacLeod & the Iona Community pg 10

- George MacLeod, a Scot who was also a Presbyterian minister from a wealthy family, founded the contemporary Iona Community in 1938. Lord MacLeod became a captain in the British military service during World War 1. His experience of devastating trench warfare led to theological reflection. On a train with wounded soldiers returning home, he had a profound experience of Christ's presence in each of those shattered, shaken bodies. Out of that moment came a resolve to engage the disenfranchised and the poor.
- In 1938, Lord MacLeod was inspired to rebuild the community on the Isle of Iona, a community that was first founded by Saint Columba in the sixth century, which had been a great monastic center of learning. Many Celtic monks, those "wandering saints," were sent forth from Iona during the early Middle Ages to teach and preach.
- Today, the Iona Community has dispersed; there are associates of the community throughout the world. Many pilgrims make their way to Iona year after year, desiring to come together in a sacred place that was and is dedicated to a gospel of peace.

John Phillip Newell and John O'Donohue pg 11

- Current authors whose work reflects the spirit of the Celtic Christian spirit.
- John Phillip Newell and his wife Ali were co-wardens of the Iona Community
- The late John O'Donohue, and Irish writer, poet, and philosopher wrote about the Celtic practice of having a soul friend.

Chapters We Will Cover and Dates:

1. Creation – March 3
2. Prayer – March 3
3. Incarnation – March 10
4. Daily Life and Work – March 10
5. Soul Friends – March 17
6. Pilgrimage – March 17
7. Social Justice – March 24
8. Blessings as a Way of Life – March 24

Optional Homework for March 3

1. Read some of the writings/poems/prayers from Chapter's 1 and 2. Come prepared to speak on any that resonated with you.
2. Contemplate the prologue to the Gospel of John and the excerpt from JSE's homily on the prologue. Pg21

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. *John 1:1-5 NSRV*

Now the eternal light manifests itself to the world in two ways, through the Bible and creatures. For the divine knowledge cannot be restored in us except by the letters of scripture and the sight of creatures. Learn the words of scripture and understand their meaning in your soul; there you will discover the Word. Know the forms and beauty of sensible things by your physical senses, and see there the Word of God. And in all these things Truth itself proclaims to you only he who made all things, and apart from whom there is nothing for you to contemplate since he is himself all things. He himself is the being of all things.

John Scotus Eriugena, Homily on the Prologue to the Gospel of John

Closing Prayer