

Wednesday Reflection: Grass

A central feature of most gardens is grass. Whether it is the extensive lawns of large country houses, a public park or a more modest expanse of a suburban manse, blades of grass, thousands upon thousands, bestow immense colour upon our world. Public parks are places for football, cricket, afternoon strolls, barbeques and idle conversations. Grass is a bed to stretch out on or a cushioned seat upon which to sit cross-legged.

In the very first chapter of the Book of Genesis, God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass....And the earth brought forth grass’. In Deuteronomy, God said to Moses, ‘My doctrine, my teaching, shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass’. There is an incredible gentleness in the teaching of God. In Psalm 147, we read:

Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving;
sing praise upon the harp unto our God:
who covereth the heaven with clouds,
who prepareth rain for the earth,
who maketh the grass to grow upon the mountain.

In the Gospel of St Matthew, in his extended Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow;
they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you,
even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.
But if God so clothes the grass of the field,
which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven,
will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

If I may be permitted an imaginative leap from grasses to rushes which, at least, are superficially the same, it was with green rushes that Christians in Ireland wove St Brigid’s Cross. According to

tradition, Brigid was born in County Louth in the Republic of Ireland in 451 CE. Her mother was a Christian Pict slave who had been baptised by St Patrick. Around 480, Brigid founded a monastery in Kildare. Kildare or *Cill Dara* means ‘church of the oak’. She led a group of women in a consecrated religious life and, among other things, is believed to have established a school of art. It was from the meticulous labours of the Kildare Scriptorium that the Book of Kildare came. In the twelfth century, the book received high praise, though it was destroyed at the Reformation. The book contained a harmony of the Four Evangelists and on almost every page there were ‘different designs, distinguished by varied colours’. One reader said:

Here you may see the face of majesty, divinely drawn,
here the mystic symbols of the Evangelists,
each with wings, now six, now four, now two;
here the eagle, there the calf, here the man and there the lion,
and other forms almost infinite.

In the hagiography which surrounds Brigid, it was said that her prayers were able to still the wind and the rain. In Antarctica, St Brigid Island is named after the saint of Kildare. In Scotland, place names honour her: East Kilbride, West Kilbride and, in Moray, the northern village of Lhanbryde, the name of which means ‘Church of Brigid’.



In our daily lives, it is helpful to practise the Presence, bringing to mind the nearness of God. Place names may help us but so too nature. If the grass reminds us of Jesus’ words, that God clothes us like God clothes the grass then, for a moment, we will be more open to the Sacred in whom we live and move. If the grass reminds us of the rushes of Brigit’s Cross then, for a moment, we may draw strength from the Communion of Saints surrounding and supporting us.