

PRAYING WITH THE CELTIC SAINTS



ST BRENDAN OF THE OCEANS

**In the name of the sending Father.
In the name of the pilgrim Son.
In the name of the wind-like Spirit.
In the name of the Three-in-One.**

High King of land and sea:
Wherever we go is yours.
You led our forebears by cloud and fire:
You lead us through the days and nights.
You led St Brendan by sign and sail:
Your presence goes before us now.

PRAYER OF ST BRENDAN

Shall I leave the soft comforts of home, O Lord
and be without money, power and honour?
Shall I launch my little boat on the great sparkling ocean?
Shall I leave the prints of my knees on my own native land
and face the lonely sea?
Stand by me God
when it comes to the wild waves. **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 107 : 23-32

Some went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters.
They saw the works of the LORD, his wonderful deeds in the deep.
For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves.
They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths;
in their peril their courage melted away.
They reeled and staggered like drunkards; they were at their wits' end.
Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble
and he brought them out of their distress.
He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed.
They were glad when it grew calm and he guided them to their desired haven.
Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind.
Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people
and praise him in the council of the elders.



Acts 27 : 19-26

On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved. After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island."

Mark 4 : 35 - 41

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"



THE LIFE OF ST BRENDAN

Also known as Brendan the Navigator, he was born in Tralee, Ireland in AD 489 and there are many manuscripts, attesting to his adventures. He was brought up in monasteries on stories of the biblical travellers – Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jonah and founded many monasteries himself, becoming the spiritual father of over 3,000 monks. Jesus' teaching that everyone who has left family or possessions for his sake would receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life spoke deeply to Brendan and inspired his travels. The most famous story associated with him is his journey to the 'Island of Promise'. He had heard tell of a place beyond the horizon, far from human clamour, which was full of light and fragrant flowers and where all the stones were jewels. He consulted his fellow monks and they fasted and prayed for 40 days, during which time he saw a vision in which an angel assured him he would see this island. He built a boat covering the frame with ox-hides and set off with 14 companions.

As in many Celtic tales and legends, the kernel of truth that feeds them is often embellished! In this case, one such embellishment was thought (for centuries) to be that Brendan and his companions sailed to the Americas – long before Columbus. That was until 1976, when Tim Severin build a coracle and covered it in ox-hide and set out with 5 companions to see if it could have been possible. After a hair-raising voyage, they landed in Newfoundland in June 1977. In the accounts of Brendan's travels, we read that he encountered many islands and experienced a fish as large as an island (a whale), an island of sparkling crystal

(an iceberg), a barren island with a mountain spitting fire (a volcano) and great swarms of glittering fish. His descriptions tell us that he travelled by the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland and Newfoundland (the route take by Severin) and suggests that he skirted back by the Azores and Spain. He didn't find his island and returned home enriched, but sad. His mother told him (somewhat belatedly!) that using the skins of killed animals would prevent him landing on an ideal island, for he would spoil its innocence.

Setting out again, this time in a wooden boat, he discovered the island, where he was invited ashore and warmly welcomed by holy men and found it beyond his dreams. The island was a place of health, joy, feasting, meadows and angels. But to his great sadness, he was told to leave before he tainted it. Two years later, he returned home, this time a fulfilled person.

Brendan travelled *with* the Lord, rather than setting out to find him. He knew Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life. Like the early disciples, he understood Jesus as someone always on the move and set out to go with his Spirit, discovering more about him and himself along the way. He understood that while the Island of Promise was a destination, in fact it was the journey itself that was the real destination.

Brendan died aged 90 and only then did he really set foot on the true Island of Promise. His death was simply another voyage to discover even more about Jesus.

REFLECTION

Life is a voyage full of dangers – with possible shipwrecks, monsters and enemies, as well beautiful places and the surprising generosity of strangers. Sometimes, we can be tested by new adventures as we go with the currents and tides of life. Occasionally, we discover new insights, wisdom, knowledge and faith and at very special times, we glimpse a vision of paradise itself. If we are spiritually alive, we will find that we are tested *and* blessed as we venture out of the safety of our harbours. During this pandemic and the lockdown, it may appear that we have 'run aground' or 'dropped anchor' – unable to sail freely. However, the limitations imposed by the crisis have, perhaps, reduced our busyness, freeing us to explore new avenues of faith and our relationship with God and each other. Surely a blessing - and a journey worth making? Let's spend a few moments reflecting on our spiritual voyage over the last months. What has God shown to us? What have we discovered about God and about ourselves and how can these revelations enrich us in the future?



WE PRAY

Forgetting what is past, we look to the things unseen

We journey in your light.

We leave behind our ties

We journey with single hearts.

We look not to right or left, but straight towards your way

We journey in your truth.

The rough places shall be smoothed and the pitfalls shall be cleared

We journey in your power.

The proud shall be brought low and the humble shall be raised up

We journey in your justice.

The hungry shall be fed and the poor shall have good news

We journey in your love.

No final home have we on this life's passing seas

We journey towards our eternal home.

Amen.

OUR PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD



Lord of our journey, we thank you for the ways you lead us and we ask your help as we travel on, sometimes through frightening places.

We pray for all who feel overwhelmed by the effects of the pandemic. Help them to navigate fear, sickness, loneliness and loss. Still the storms of inflamed relationships, of all forms of abuse caused or worsened by the lockdown. Protect the vulnerable - guide them into the safe waters of your peace.

Jesus, who stilled the wind and waves **Grant them calm in the storm**

We pray for our brothers and sisters throughout the world who, like, us, are fighting this pandemic, but also many other more deadly diseases and who, unlike us, do not have access to the medical care we enjoy. Bless the work of the aid agencies and protect all those who endanger their own lives to save others.

Jesus, who stilled the wind and waves **Grant them calm in the storm**

We remember those areas in the world suffering drought – the lack of rain killing livestock and preventing crop growth, bringing famine in its wake. Give us a heart to share what we have – to ease the pain of those who have nothing.

Jesus, who stilled the wind and waves ... **Grant them calm in the storm**

We bring before you our brothers and sisters, whose journey is marked by danger and suffering. We pray for those who travel into the unknown : refugees fleeing from conflict, leaving behind them the rubble of a former, happy life. Bless them as they struggle with so many difficulties and now with the effects of the pandemic. Guide them into a new life and a safe haven.

Jesus, who stilled the wind and waves **Grant them calm in the storm**

We pray for the coming of your Kingdom, when justice and peace will reign. Turn hearts to see in everyone a child created and loved by you. We pray an end to oppression, to exploitation, to discrimination and to racism. Give hope to all who are downtrodden, to all who despair of ever experiencing freedom or equality.

Jesus, who stilled the wind and waves **Grant them calm in the storm**

For those who are suffering in body, mind or spirit, we pray. Remembering before you those we carry on our hearts today

Jesus, who stilled the wind and waves **Grant them calm in the storm**

For those who have come to the end of their earthly journey, we pray eternal rest. For those who mourn them and travel on without them, we pray.

Jesus, who stilled the wind and waves **Grant them calm in the storm**

Father, we thank you for Brendan's adventures for Christ on sea and land and his drawing together of people into communities of love. Kindle in us a spirit of endless adventure, a heart that seeks you and a love that forges fresh and enduring bonds of community.

Jesus, who stilled the wind and waves ... **These prayers we offer in your Holy Name. Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BLESSING

**May the God of our pilgrimage strengthen our desire
to take the questing way and grow on our journey of faith.**

**May our eyes be fixed on Jesus, so that going forth with the vision of God,
we'll sail into his ocean of love.**

**May the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
rest on us and those we love and pray for today and always.**

Amen.

