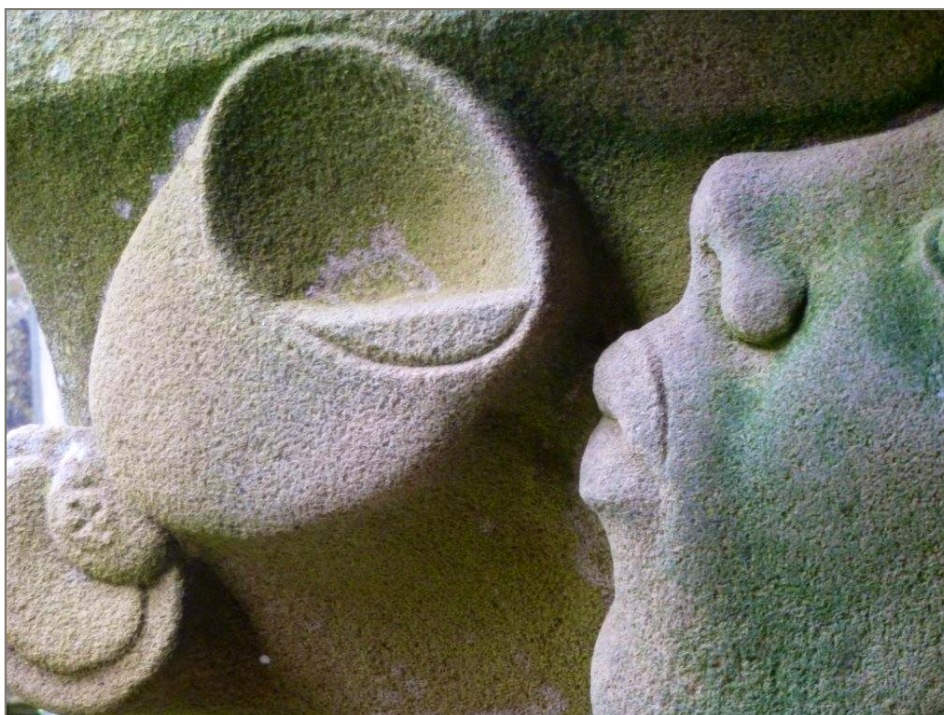

Lent: Thirst

Getting Ready

You may want to light a candle and/or set out a water pitcher or glass on your altar-table or meditation space. Take time to settle. Open your heart to a sense of the Holy that dwells within you as you gaze upon the photo. (below)

Visio Divina: Sacred Seeing for the Beginning of Lent

Photo by Heather MacDougall, taken at the Iona Abbey Cloisters in Scotland



Journal/Reflection Notes

Take some time to draw or write in response to your time of sacred seeing and prayer. It's not important to answer any or all of the questions. The questions are meant to prompt your reflection. What are your questions?

As you begin Lent, did anything in particular inspire or call out to you?
Were there parts of the photo that evoked discomfort or resistance in you? You may want to pay particular attention. Our resistance often has much to teach.

Were there particular feelings or longings or memories that came to you?

How is the Sacred speaking to your life through this photograph?

An Offering of Words: Awakening Thirst

The photograph captures one of the carvings in the rough sandstone pillars that line the cloisters at the Iona Abbey in Scotland. The carver is Chris Hall. I watched him work on these images during the time I spent with The Iona Community many years ago.

It's a poignant image, isn't it?

It is a moment we know well,
the moment we lift a glass, a mug, a goblet to our lips.

It is the moment before tasting,
a moment of savouring when, if we take our time before swallowing,
we can smell the coming taste.

If we wait,
we can see the shivering of liquid edge from its hollowed place toward the rim.

We anticipate with our lips.

Our throat prepares a welcome.

This is what I want to say as we begin our Lent journey.

We have everything we need. This is the mystery, the paradox, of living in the present moment.

Yes, I know, sometimes life drains the goodness out of our days.
Yes, sometimes the cup feels half empty and leaking.
Yes, sometimes we are hollowed out, aching and parched,
And wondering, in the dregs is there enough?

And sometimes the cup is too full. Over-flowing.
We are awash in too much, too much of a good thing,
too much time on our hands, too much stuff.
Or we are over-loaded with care, anxiety, endless to do's.
Yet, even as life spills-over us, we long to catch a sacred moment,
a blessing in the cascade.

And sometimes, like Goldilocks, our cup of life is just right.
We have everything we need.
Yet, here we are, awaiting invitation on this Lenten journey
longing to be a little more present to the daily round,
giving up or letting go, whatever it takes
to make ourselves more available to the Sacred in our days.

Our word is Quench.
Our soul-thirsts can be quenched.
This is the Mystery of Easter where
Life fills the cup of life even as it drains out.

But, before that, we need to allow ourselves to feel our thirst.

For the next while I invite us to hold this moment,
the moment before the cup touches our lips,
the moment before quenching our thirst.

It is an invitation to allow ourselves to awaken our deepest thirst,
to be aware of the true contours of our thirst,
to stay with our soul-thirsts and learn their names.

The Psalm writers call out, over and over: *"My soul thirsts for you."*
(Read Psalm 63 and Psalm 143)

Pay attention. When you lift a cup of glass to drink create a small space
of waiting before tasting. It gives intention to your desire. It is enough
this week to simply become aware of our thirsts.

Here are some questions that might help you become more aware of your thirsts:

When you feel empty or restless notice what you do to fill the emptiness?

When you feel full or overwhelmed what do you let go? What gets left out?

Even if you enter Lent feeling 'just right', is there an invitation or intention calling you to 'go deeper' in these days of Lent?

Intention for Beginning Lent

You may want to spend time with these words by the songwriter, Carrie Newcomer. I found them on her [blog](#).

*"I know that changing a culture of busy will be difficult,
But, I can pay attention.
I can call my soul back from ten miles up the road,
I can remember how brightly life shines in small fleeting moments.
I can frame each day with the question "What do I love deeply and truly," and follow that thread.
I can bow my head and call a night of healing sleep "blessed",
I can start my day awake and end it grateful.
I can do one thing at a time,
And live that one thing well.
I can center myself in possibility,
Knowing that impossible things
Just take a little more time." - Carrie Newcomer, Songwriter.*

This beginning is simply about making space each day to notice your thirsts. You may want to return to the "Thirst" photograph and sit with it again. Is there a particular line in Newcomer's words that stirs you? Perhaps an invitation just for you? Can you sit with your morning coffee with deeper intention? (See my blog on ["Coffee as Spiritual Practice."](#))

You may not need to add more to your day but in these Lent days, add more intention to a moment in your day.

Blessing ...From the Heart of a Poet

The poet, Jane Hirshfield, describes a picture you might have seen or perhaps you can imagine it.

*The quiet opening
between fence strands
perhaps eighteen inches.*

*Antlers to hind hooves,
four feet off the ground,
the deer poured through.*

No tuft of the coarse white belly hair left behind.

You can read the full poem here: [http://
www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/supple-deer](http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/supple-deer)

She goes on to say that she is envious, not of the deer but of the fence.

"To be that porous, to have such largeness pass through me."

It is rich blessing to open our hearts
to have the largeness of each day,
each moment,
pass through us.
May it be so for you.

Amen.

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