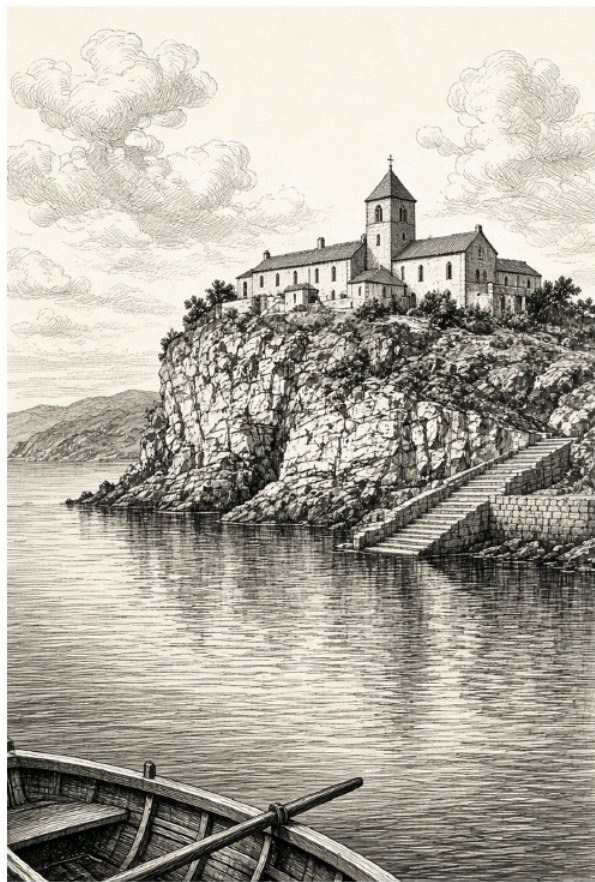




SILENT HOMILIES

The Cold Island

*Caldey, the Anglican monks who came home,
and the Cistercians who stayed*



Silent Homilies

A book



SILENT HOMILIES

The Cold Island

*Caldey, the Anglican monks who came home,
and the Cistercians who stayed*

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the monks who still keep the hours on Caldey, and to everyone who has taken the boat from Tenby wondering what the white roofs are for.

Preface

Why this book was written

Off the coast of Pembrokeshire, a short boat ride from Tenby, there is an island the Norsemen called Caldey. The usual English explanation of the name is “the cold island.” Anyone who has stood on the cliff in a west wind will understand why that explanation has lasted.

I have been there. I have walked from the landing up toward the white roofs. I have prayed with the monks. I have offered Holy Mass on the island with people from the parish. I have stood in the older church and in the newer one. I have bought the chocolate that visitors talk about. I have also sat still long enough to notice that Caldey is not mainly a day trip. Visitors arrive with cameras and walking shoes. The monastery keeps another timetable. That timetable is the prayer of the Church.

Monks were on Caldey in the sixth century. They were there again in the twelfth century, as a small house linked to the Tironensian abbey at St Dogmaels. Henry VIII emptied the place in 1536. For nearly four hundred years the island was a farm with a ruined priory. The psalms were not sung there.

In 1906 Anglican Benedictines landed. They built a white abbey that still startles visitors. They tried to live the Rule of Saint Benedict inside the Church of England. In 1913 most of them were received into the Catholic Church by the Bishop of Menevia. It was one of the rare times a whole monastery came over together. The money later failed. Those Benedictines went inland to Prinknash. In 1929 Cistercian monks came from Belgium. Their community is there still.

Almost nobody in an ordinary pew has this story whole. It belongs to Wales. It belongs to the old Catholic diocese of Menevia, now part of the Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia. It belongs to anyone who thinks monastic life is only a postcard from France or Italy. This book tells it as a neighbour story: an island, a boat, a crisis of obedience, and a silence that lasted after the crisis.

The facts have been checked against the island's own published history, against the published correspondence of 1912 and 1913, and against the records of the Cistercian Order. Where dates in the memoirs differ by a few days, I say so. I have not invented conversations or miracles. Where I speak in the first person, I am describing only what I have actually done on the island: walking, praying, celebrating Mass, keeping silence, and tasting the chocolate.

How to use this book

This is a book you can read straight through. That is the simplest way. The four parts follow the journey: the crossing and the early history; the white abbey and the choice of 1913; the Cistercians who stayed; and the island as it is now.

You can also come in at the point that interests you. If you have stood on Tenby harbour and wondered what the white roofs are, begin at the beginning. If you care about how Anglicans and Catholics parted, and sometimes met again, begin with Bishop Gore and the letters of 1913. If you only want the island as it is now, begin with the Cistercians, the chocolate, and the later chapters.

Each chapter is followed by a short reflection and a prayer. They are not exercises to complete the same day. They are a way of letting one idea from the chapter settle. You do not need to visit Caldey in order to use this book. The island can teach from the mainland. If you do take the boat, take the book with you if you wish. Read a chapter on the water. Look up when the island comes into view.

Contents

Dedication

Preface

How to use this book

Part One — Crossing and first stones

1. The boat from Tenby
2. The name the Vikings left
3. Pyro and Samson
4. Priory, quarry, silence
5. What a monastery is for

Part Two — The white roofs and the choice

6. Carlyle and the white roofs
7. A bishop's conditions
8. The things they would not drop
9. Lent 1913
10. Marmion, a habit, a bill
11. Prinknash inland

Part Three — Who kept the rock

12. Cistercians from Belgium
13. Chocolate, perfume, and the hidden work
14. Three layers on one acre
15. Why they converted
16. Menevia across the water

Part Four — The boat still runs

17. Silence while the boat unloads
18. Mass on the island

19. Whether it worked
 20. An outing that could be a pilgrimage
 21. Salt on the Rule
 22. If the wind is right
- A letter to the reader
- Sources and further reading
- A word of thanks

Part One

Crossing and first stones

Chapter 1

The boat from Tenby

The journey is already part of the story.

The boat leaves Tenby harbour and the town falls behind you.

On a clear day you can already see the island from the harbour wall. The crossing is short. It is not nothing. The sea between Tenby and Caldey is real water. The wind can change. The boat can bounce. People hold the rail and take photographs of the coloured houses slipping away.

I have made that crossing. Each time I notice the same small change. On the harbour you are still in a holiday town. Shops. Ice cream. The sound of the promenade. After a few minutes the town becomes a strip of colour on the shore. The island grows. White walls and red roofs appear above the rock. Then you are no longer looking at a postcard. You are heading toward a place where men still get up in the night to pray.

Most passengers have come for a pleasant day. That is honest. The island is beautiful. There are gardens, a village, a chocolate shop, a perfume shop, and paths along the coast. Children count the time until they can buy something. Adults talk about the weather and whether they remembered the return boat.

Under all of that another question waits. Why is there a monastery on that island? Why does a small rock off the Welsh coast still have monks when so many greater houses are ruins?

The answer is stranger than most visitors realise. The white abbey was not built by the monks who live there now. It was built by Anglican Benedictines who hoped the Church of England could grow a

monastery as the Catholic Church did. Then most of those men became Catholic. Then they had to leave. Then another family of monks came from Belgium and stayed.

If you only see chocolate and a pretty skyline, you have not yet arrived. This book is an attempt to walk you through the place without rushing.

A Small Reflection

You cannot wander onto Caldey by accident. The water is in the way. Someone has to buy a ticket, wait for the weather, and step onto a boat.

A good deal of Christian life can be entered without much decision. You can grow up near a church. You can keep a habit you never chose. You can remain vaguely well disposed. Some things ask for a real decision. Confession does. A retreat does. A vocation does. So does any honest look at a question you have been circling for years.

The boat from Tenby is only a boat. It is not a picture of the whole Gospel. It does, however, show something simple. Some holy places, and some holy changes, ask us to leave our usual routine for a while. You leave the promenade. You accept that you may be cold. You accept that the return is not in your hands until the skipper says so.

Most of us will not become monks. We may still need, now and then, to step away from the usual day and make room for God.

A short prayer

Lord, when we need to leave our usual shore for a while, give us the courage to take the first step. Amen.

Chapter 2

The name the Vikings left

Caldey, Ynys Byr.

The English name is Norse. Caldey is usually explained as “the cold island.” Some writers have also suggested a link with a spring, from another Norse word. The cold reading is the one ordinary people remember, and the weather on the cliff does nothing to contradict it.

The older Welsh name is Ynys Byr, Pyro’s Island. That name keeps the memory of the first abbot people still recall. In the sixth century a monastery stood here among the holy islands of the western sea. Britain then was not the country we draw on a modern map. The Christian life of Wales and the west was a world of small communities, boats, and saints who travelled. Caldey belonged to that world.

The cold in the name is useful. It stops us turning the island into a poster. Monastic life here has never been a mild climate. The sea is close. The rock is exposed. Supplies come by boat. Weather decides whether visitors arrive. The name tells a physical truth before the guidebook does.

What matters for this book is not only the name. It is the memory the ground kept. People did not forget that monks had been there. When monks returned in the twentieth century, they were not inventing holiness on a blank rock. They were returning to an island with a much older monastic history. The buildings of the first community are gone. The memory was not.

A Small Reflection

Place names often last longer than walls. Ynys Byr still carries a sixth-century abbot. Caldey still carries a Norse sailor's description of the weather. Neither name was invented by a tourist board. Both names are a kind of memory that ordinary speech can keep.

The Church does something similar. We remember saints in the calendar. We remember the dead in the Eucharistic Prayer. We remember baptisms in a register that outlives the people who signed it. A great deal of Catholic life is the refusal to let important things become anonymous.

That is why it is worth knowing what a place is called, and why. A name can keep a person when the building has gone. It can also keep a warning. Cold is not an insult to Caldey. It is a description.

If you look at a map today, Caldey is very close to ordinary Welsh streets. Holiness, when it lasts, is rarely far from ordinary life.

A short prayer

*Lord, keep the old names honest, and keep the old memory of prayer
alive. Amen.*

Chapter 3

Pyro and Samson

A school of prayer before the map we know.

Pyro is remembered as an early abbot of Caldey. The island's Welsh name keeps him. After him the story names Saint Samson.

Samson was one of the great travellers of the British Church. He is linked with Llantwit Major, with Caldey, and later with Dol in Brittany. The old lives of the saints are not modern biographies. They mix memory, teaching, and wonder. We should not pretend to know every detail.

We can say this much with a clear conscience. In the sixth century Caldey was already a place of monastic prayer. Saint Dyfrig is said to have spent Lent on the island. Samson is named among those who kept the place. The island was already teaching men to seek God beside the same water that visitors photograph today.

That first community rose and fell with the centuries, as island houses do. Viking raids may have ended the early settlement. The details are thin. The desire is not thin. Men crossed water in small boats in order to live a life of prayer. They did not do it because the island was convenient. They did it because a certain kind of Christian life needs a place where the world becomes quieter.

This was early Welsh monastic Christianity, part of the wider Church, not a separate romantic "Celtic Church" standing over against Rome. The men who prayed here belonged to the same faith that later built the priory and, much later, received the white abbey into Catholic communion. The map has changed. The desire to seek God in

community has not.

When a visitor walks the paths now, it is easy to think the story begins with the white abbey. It does not. The white abbey is a later chapter. The first chapter is a monastery whose buildings we can no longer see. The second is a medieval priory whose stones we can still touch.

A Small Reflection

The first monks on Caldey left almost nothing you can photograph. No white roofs. No chocolate shop. No plan of the wooden buildings. What remained was a memory strong enough to give the island a name.

A great deal of Christian work is like that. A hospital chaplain sits with someone who will not be in next week's newsletter. A parent teaches a child to pray and never sees the later fruit. A parish keeps weekday Mass for a handful of people. Hidden work is still work. The Church has always depended on it.

The danger is to treat only visible success as real. The early history of Caldey will not let us do that. We do not possess a complete archive. We possess a tradition, a name, and the later habit of returning to the same rock to pray. That is already a serious inheritance.

Not everything valuable leaves a building. Some of it leaves a name, a custom, and a reason for later generations to begin again.

A short prayer

Saint Samson, pray for those who cross water in order to pray. Saint Pyro, keep the name of the island honest. Amen.

Chapter 4

Priory, quarry, silence

St Dogmaels, then Henry, then ash.

In the twelfth century the island became a cell of the Tironensian Benedictines of St Dogmaels, near Cardigan.

Those monks were a reforming family from Tiron in France. They were planted along the Welsh coast. Robert fitz Martin and his family helped to found St Dogmaels around 1113 to 1115. Caldey was among its endowments. The old priory buildings that visitors still find above the landing belong to that house. The church with the odd twisted spire, the ranges around the little cloister, the sense of a small community packed into stone: that is the medieval layer.

The priory was never large. At times only a few monks lived there. One later survey found the house poor and small. Size is not the point. For four centuries the psalms were said on that rock under the Rule of Saint Benedict, in the Tironensian way.

In 1536 the Dissolution reached the water. Henry VIII closed the lesser monasteries of England and Wales. St Dogmaels and Caldey went with them. The island passed into lay hands. Limestone was quarried. Farms were worked. The priory became a ruin with a memory.

The Dissolution is easy to treat as a date in a school book. On Caldey it meant something very concrete. The choir stopped. The hours stopped. A place that had been organised around the praise of God became a place organised around stone and sheep. That is what it means when a monastery is dissolved. The building may remain. The community that justified the building is sent away.

We should not invent details we cannot support. We do not need to. For nearly four hundred years the Office was not sung on Caldey. That silence is part of the story. When monks returned, they were not continuing a line that had never broken. They were beginning again on ground that still remembered prayer. Visitors who walk through the old priory are walking through that silence as well as through those stones.

A Small Reflection

When a religious house closes, more disappears than a roof. A timetable disappears. A community of people bound by vows disappears. A particular way of holding the hours of the day before God disappears.

Buildings can be reused. A priory can become a farm. A church can become a monument. The psalms, if no one is left to say them in that place, simply stop. That is a quieter loss than a demolition, and sometimes a deeper one.

Catholics today know something of this. Parishes are merged. Convents are sold. Vocations thin out. The temptation is either to panic or to pretend that nothing important has changed. Caldey's long silence after 1536 asks for a third response: tell the truth, grieve the loss, and do not confuse a surviving wall with a living choir.

The later return of monks does not cancel the interruption. It shows that God can begin again on the same ground. Beginning again is not the same as pretending the break never happened.

A short prayer

Lord, remember the choirs that were sent away, and the stones that still remember them. Amen.

Chapter 5

What a monastery is for

A house whose timetable belongs to God.

Before the Anglican monks arrive in the story, it helps to say what a monastery is.

A monastery is not a hotel with robes. It is not a museum that happens to have residents. It is a house of men or women who have promised to seek God together under a rule, under an abbot or abbess, inside the Church. In the West the great pattern is the Rule of Saint Benedict, written in the sixth century. Benedict did not invent prayer. He organised a way of life in which prayer, work, and reading could survive ordinary human weakness.

The heart of that life is the Divine Office, also called the Liturgy of the Hours. It is the Church's daily prayer, built mainly on the Psalms. Monks do not pray the Office because they have spare time. They pray it because this is their vocation: to give a whole life to the Church's praise. Lauds in the morning. Vespers in the evening. Compline before sleep. And in many houses, the night office while the mainland is dark.

This is the prayer of the Church, not a private hobby of specialists. The rest of the Church prays the Hours too, in parish churches and in kitchens and on trains. Monks have a particular call to make that rhythm the shape of the whole day. They do not pray instead of us. They pray with us, and often when we cannot.

Benedictines live according to the Rule of Saint Benedict. Cistercians grew as a reform within that same Benedictine tradition, seeking a simpler and more hidden form of the life. The Order of Cistercians of

the Strict Observance is often called the Trappists. They work with their hands. They keep more silence. They do not exist to run parishes. They exist to seek God in a community poor enough and regular enough to stay honest.

Silence, in this setting, is not emptiness. It is a tool. It makes room for the Word of God. It also makes room for the truth about yourself. That is why a visitor can feel the difference on Caldey even without understanding the timetable. The island has two rhythms. One belongs to the boat and the shop. The other belongs to the choir.

When I have been on the island, that second rhythm is what stays with me. You can hear a door. You can see a monk crossing a yard. You can sense that the day is not arranged around visitors. The visitors are allowed. They are even welcomed. They are not the reason the house exists.

A Small Reflection

Monks pray because the hour has come. That sounds simple. It is one of the most useful Catholic thoughts you can take home from an island.

A good deal of modern prayer waits for a mood. We will pray when we feel ready, when the house is quiet, when the week is less crowded. The Office does not wait. Morning comes. Evening comes. The psalm is there whether you feel devout or tired or distracted.

This is not a method for managing time. It is a way of discipleship. God is worthy of praise at the appointed hour, not only when praise happens to be convenient. Parents already know a version of this. So do nurses. So does anyone who has kept a promise on a day when they did not feel like keeping it.

You do not need a cloister to learn the lesson. Night prayer before sleep. A psalm at midday. Vespers in a nearby church if you can. The monks are not collecting spiritual points. They are keeping the Church's prayer when many of us cannot.

A short prayer

Father, give us a life that has hours for you, not only hours for ourselves.

Amen.

Part Two

The white roofs and the choice

Chapter 6

Carlyle and the white roofs

Anglican Benedictines, 1906 to 1910.

Benjamin Fearnley Carlyle, later Dom Aelred, was an Anglican who wanted Benedict's Rule inside the Church of England.

He was young and magnetic. He was sure that monastic life could be English without ceasing to be monastic. After several false starts, Archbishop Frederick Temple of Canterbury sanctioned his profession. That fact matters. This was not a private fancy in a garden. It had a blessing from Canterbury. Carlyle gathered brothers. He had the friendship of Lord Halifax, the great Anglo-Catholic layman who spent his life hoping for reunion with Rome.

The Reverend William Done Bushell, who owned Caldey, offered the island. An earlier attempt around 1901 failed for lack of money. Support from leading Anglo-Catholics allowed the community to purchase the island in 1906. Between 1906 and 1910 they built the abbey that still startles visitors: white walls, red roofs, an Italian outline against a Welsh sky. John Coates Carter of Cardiff designed much of what we see, in the Arts and Crafts manner. At first it was called the cottage monastery, because the workmen's cottages went up before the church.

Anglo-Catholics came on pilgrimage. Ronald Knox, still an Anglican then, stayed and felt the air grow intense. Caldey became a rumour and a hope. Some people said it was proof that the Church of England could grow monks as the Catholic Church did.

Carlyle was not a simple hero and not a simple villain. He could inspire people. He could build. He could also spend beyond the available funds. Fine things in art and architecture ran ahead of the money. By 1913 a very large sum had been spent on buying the island and raising the walls. That tension would return later. For the moment the white roofs made a simple and daring claim. Monastic life, they said, could stand again on a Welsh rock inside the Established Church.

A Small Reflection

The Anglican monks built before they knew how the story would end. That is true of most serious beginnings.

A vocation, a marriage, a parish project, a first year in a new country: none of them comes with a finished last chapter. You begin because the thing in front of you seems worth doing. You do not begin because you have already secured the ending.

Caldey's white abbey is the remains of that kind of courage. It is also the remains of that kind of risk. The abbey was beautiful, but beauty had to be paid for, and the community later struggled with those costs. A sincere beginning does not guarantee an easy future. It can still be worth making.

The Church is full of unfinished founders. Some of them raised something that later generations had to reshape. That does not make the first stone a mistake. It means the first stone was only the beginning.

A short prayer

Lord, give us the courage to begin good work without knowing how it will end. Amen.

Chapter 7

A bishop's conditions

Gore, the Prayer Book, and obedience.

By 1912 the community wanted clearer standing inside the Church of England. They asked for an Anglican visitor, a bishop who would watch over them.

The man who took up that role was Charles Gore, Bishop of Oxford. Gore was no enemy of seriousness. He was a scholar, a founder of the Community of the Resurrection, and one of the most respected High Church voices of his generation. He was not a cartoon Protestant. He cared about the Catholic inheritance of Anglicanism. He also believed that an Anglican monastery had to live inside Anglican law.

Gore sent two priests to inspect Caldey in January 1913. The report that followed was not a rant. It was a list of conditions. The monks were asked to use the Book of Common Prayer as their public liturgy. They were asked to drop or restrict certain Catholic practices that Gore judged to be beyond what the Church of England could authorise. They were asked to accept that their visitor had real authority over the house.

Carlyle and most of the community could not accept those conditions. They believed that reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction, and certain Marian doctrines were not extras. They were part of the Catholic faith they thought they were already living. Gore thought otherwise. Both men were sincere. Both thought they were defending the Church.

The letters of those weeks are painful to read if you love both sides of the story. Gore was not trying to destroy a monastery. He was trying to

keep it Anglican. The monks were not trying to insult him. They were trying to keep what they believed they could not surrender.

Eventually the community had to decide which Church it believed had authority over its worship and doctrine. That is what the letters forced into the open.

A Small Reflection

Sincere people can disagree about authority and still respect one another. Caldey is a reminder of that.

Gore was not a villain. The monks were not children looking for a more colourful liturgy. The argument was about who had the right to decide what a monastery may believe and how it may pray.

Many of us prefer questions of experience. How does this make me feel? Does this community suit me? Those questions matter. They are not the only questions. At some point a Christian community has to say who may teach, who may correct, and who may bind the house.

The monks of Caldey reached that point. So did their bishop. The letters did not invent the divide. They only made it impossible to postpone.

A short prayer

Lord, give us honesty when we disagree, and humility when the disagreement concerns your Church. Amen.

Chapter 8

The things they would not drop

Reservation, Benediction, Mary, the Hours.

The points of conflict were not about taste in vestments.

Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament means keeping the consecrated Host in a tabernacle after Mass, so that Christ may be adored and taken to the sick. Benediction is the blessing of the people with the Blessed Sacrament exposed in a monstrance. Both practices assume a Catholic understanding of the Real Presence. They also assume that the Church has the authority to treat the Eucharist in that way.

The monks also held the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Our Lady as part of the faith. In 1913 the Assumption had not yet been defined as a dogma by Rome, but it was already ancient Catholic belief. Gore could allow much private devotion. He could not accept that an Anglican house should treat these as if they were binding doctrine inside the Church of England.

There was also the Divine Office. The monks used a Catholic breviary. Gore wanted the Prayer Book to govern public worship. That was not a small request. It touched the daily shape of the house.

Some disagreements among Christians are about style. Some are about doctrine and authority. Caldey belonged to the second kind. The monks believed they could not remain Anglican and keep the faith they were already living. Gore believed they could not remain Anglican and keep those practices as they stood.

We should not flatten that into a cartoon. Many Anglicans have loved the Eucharist deeply. Many have honoured Mary. The question

on Caldey was not whether Anglicans prayed. It was whether this particular house could keep these particular claims under this particular bishop.

A Small Reflection

Some disagreements are about taste. Others concern doctrine and authority. It helps to know which kind you are in.

A parish argument about hymns is not the same as a disagreement about the Eucharist. A preference for one translation is not the same as a question about who may teach the faith. Caldey forces that distinction into the open.

The monks did not leave because the island was inconvenient. They left a Church they had loved because they believed they could not surrender what they held to be Catholic faith. Gore did not impose conditions because he disliked monasteries. He imposed them because he believed an Anglican house had to live under Anglican authority.

The rest of us can take the same distinction home. Not every conflict is a matter of personality. Some conflicts are about what the Church actually is.

A short prayer

*Lord Jesus, present in the Eucharist, teach us to know the difference
between taste and truth. Amen.*

Chapter 9

Lent 1913

Bishop Mostyn receives a house.

In Lent 1913 the community acted.

Memoirs do not all use the same day. Some early notices speak of late February. The date commonly used in Catholic memory, and in later Benedictine commemoration, is 5 March 1913. This book follows that date without pretending that every letter uses the same morning.

On that day Francis Mostyn, Bishop of Menevia, received Dom Aelred Carlyle and most of his community into the Catholic Church. A similar reception followed for most of the associated Anglican nuns at St Bride's, Milford Haven. It was a corporate reception: not one man slipping away in private, but a house coming over together. The Society of the Atonement in the United States had done something similar a few years earlier. It was still rare.

A few monks could not take that step. They remained Anglican. They left the island and later continued Benedictine life at Pershore, and from 1926 at Nashdom. That remnant matters. 1913 was not a clean sweep. It was a costly division inside a family that had prayed together.

Bishop Mostyn did not collect a trophy from a distance. He came as the local Catholic bishop and took pastoral responsibility. The men he received still had to be formed, clothed, and, in Catholic terms, started again. Conversion is not a change of address. It is entrance into the life of a Church.

The news travelled quickly. Anglo-Catholics were shaken. Catholics were surprised. The island itself looked the same. The white roofs were

still there. The sea was still there. The authority under which the house now lived was not.

A Small Reflection

A Catholic conversion story should not become a weapon against people who did not convert.

Some of the Caldey monks entered the Catholic Church. Some could not. Both groups had prayed on the same rock. Both groups had to live with the cost of their decision.

We can be grateful for those who entered full communion without treating the others as cowards. Conscience can divide sincere people. The Church receives converts. She does not need them to be used against their former friends.

If you tell the story of 1913, tell the whole of it. Include the remnant. Include the pain. Include the local bishop who had to take real responsibility. Then leave the judgement of souls where it belongs.

A short prayer

Lord, thank you for those who entered your Church at cost, and keep us from using their story against anyone. Amen.

Chapter 10

Marmion, a habit, a bill

What conversion did not cancel.

The Catholic Church did not treat the new community as a curiosity.

Abbot Columba Marmion of Maredsous came to the island to help them. Marmion was an Irish-born Benedictine and already a trusted teacher of the spiritual life. In Catholic law Carlyle was at first a layman again. The Catholic Church did not recognise his Anglican priestly ordination as valid. That is a hard sentence for anyone who has lived as an abbot. It was also the Catholic Church being consistent with her own teaching on Holy Orders.

In May 1913 Marmion took Carlyle to Rome for an audience with Pope Pius X. On 29 June the community received the Benedictine habit and the house was canonically established. Carlyle made solemn vows at Maredsous in June 1914 and was ordained priest on 5 July 1914. The Church gave them a way to continue.

She did not cancel the invoices. The island and the new abbey had cost a very large sum. Formation takes time. War was coming. Carlyle remained a gifted founder and a difficult superior. Out of those received, not all persevered to profession. Conversion gave grace. It did not automatically give money, stability, or easy government.

That honesty is part of why the story is worth telling. People sometimes imagine that becoming Catholic solves every practical problem. Caldey shows the opposite. The sacraments were real. The bills were also real. The community had entered a Church that could receive

them. It still had to live.

A Small Reflection

Receiving grace does not remove ordinary responsibilities. Bills still have to be paid. Formation still takes time. A new beginning still needs patience.

Catholics can forget this. We speak as if Baptism, reception, or a good Confession should rearrange every outward circumstance. Sometimes God does give a sudden help. Often he gives the grace to keep going inside the same difficulties.

Caldey after 1913 is a picture of that. The monks were now Catholic. They still needed money, training, and a form of life that could last. Marmion's care was real. So were the debts.

If you are waiting for a spiritual turning-point to cancel the ordinary work in front of you, this chapter is a warning and a kindness. The Church can receive you. She will not do your accounts.

A short prayer

Lord, thank you for the grace you give, and help us not to confuse it with the end of ordinary duty. Amen.

Chapter 11

Prinknash inland

The first family leaves the water.

The Catholic Benedictines could not stay on Caldey.

By the later 1920s the financial strain, the war years, and the limits of the community made the island impossible to keep. In 1928 they moved inland to Prinknash in Gloucestershire. They took the habit, the memory, and the bells with them. English Catholic monasticism in the twentieth century owes a debt to that fragile beginning.

Founders are often like that. They can raise a house and still not be the men who will keep it through the next fifty winters. Carlyle began something important, but the community's future could not depend on him alone.

On the Anglican side the remnant life continued at Pershore and then at Nashdom. So the 1906 landing produced more than one fruit. It produced a Catholic Benedictine house inland. It produced an Anglican Benedictine continuation. And it left an island that still needed monks.

Changing form is not always failure. A community can leave a building and still keep its vocation. A project can move and still be the same work. The danger is to treat every change as collapse, or every collapse as a change of no importance. Prinknash shows a third possibility. The first Catholic family left the water. The prayer they had begun did not stop.

A Small Reflection

A change of place is not always a failure.

Religious communities move. Parishes are joined. Schools close and reopen under another name. Families leave a house they loved. The question is not only whether the old form survived. The question is whether the vocation survived.

Caldey's first Catholic Benedictines could not remain on the island. That was a real loss. It was not the end of their life. They continued inland. The Anglican remnant continued elsewhere. Later another Catholic family came to the rock they had left.

If something you began has had to change shape, do not rush to call it either a triumph or a disaster. Ask whether the essential work is still being done. That is a slower question. It is usually the truer one.

A short prayer

Lord, teach us to recognise a vocation even when its first house cannot be kept. Amen.

Part Three

Who kept the rock

Chapter 12

Cistercians from Belgium

1929, Scourmont, and the men who stayed.

In 1929 Cistercian monks came from Scourmont Abbey at Chimay in Belgium.

They belonged to the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance, often called Trappists. They did not come to finish Carlyle's experiment. They came to live their own form of Benedictine life on an island that already had buildings, a history, and a need.

The house was made a priory in 1934. On 25 September 1940 a fire damaged the abbey. The community rebuilt. On 15 September 1959 Caldey became an abbey. The language of the first brothers was not Welsh or English. Belgium to Wales is a long translation. They accepted an unfinished inheritance and stayed.

That is the quiet centre of the modern story. The white roofs were built by Anglican Benedictines. The Catholic Benedictines had to leave. The Cistercians kept the rock. Visitors who think the present monks built the skyline have the layers in the wrong order. The men who live there now inherited a place they did not design.

I have felt that when I have walked the island. You are not walking through one story. You are walking through several, held together by the fact that someone is still there to pray.

A Small Reflection

Christians often live inside work they did not begin.

A parish priest arrives in a church other people built. Parents raise children in a family story older than they are. A new volunteer inherits a rota, a garden, or a debt. The Cistercians on Caldey inherited white walls, an old priory, and a complicated Christian past.

The temptation is to resent that. We want a clean start. We want a house that matches our own plan. Most of the Church's real work is not like that. We receive what others began, and we try to be faithful inside it.

If you are living in a story you did not start, you are in ordinary Catholic company. The question is not whether the inheritance is tidy. The question is whether you will keep the part that still needs doing.

A short prayer

Lord, bless those who keep work they did not begin, and make us willing to do the same. Amen.

Chapter 13

Chocolate, perfume, and the hidden work

Why monks make things you can buy.

Visitors remember the chocolate. Some remember the perfume and the shortbread. The shops are not an accident and they are not the point.

A monastery has to live. Food, fuel, repairs, insurance, and the boat all cost money. Cistercians work with their hands. Making things you can sell is part of that work. It is also a way of meeting the world without turning the cloister into a parish office.

We sometimes forget that monasteries also have bills, repairs and everyday expenses. We like the idea of holy people unspoiled by ordinary accounts. The monks of Caldey cannot afford that romance. Neither can any living house.

I have bought the chocolate. I am not embarrassed by that. It is good chocolate. Buying it is one simple way of helping the house continue. It is not the same as understanding the Office. It is not nothing either.

The hidden work is larger than the shop. Cooking. Accounting. Guest rooms. The care of buildings that stand in salt air. The hours of prayer that no visitor hears. The shop is only the part you can put in a bag and take back to Tenby.

A Small Reflection

It is easy to love a monastery in theory and forget that it has to pay for itself.

The same is true of a parish. Heating, roof repairs, insurance, and the unglamorous work of keeping a building usable are not a betrayal of prayer. They are part of what makes prayer possible in a particular place.

Caldey's chocolate is memorable because it is concrete. You can taste the fact that the monks work. You can also, if you wish, reduce the whole island to a gift shop. That would be a mistake. The shop exists because the choir exists.

If you visit, buy what you like without guilt. Then remember that the men who made it will still be there after you have gone, keeping hours you did not see.

A short prayer

Lord, bless the ordinary work that keeps houses of prayer alive. Amen.

Chapter 14

Three layers on one acre

Early Welsh, medieval, modern.

Caldey is small. The stories on it are not.

The first layer is early Welsh monastic Christianity: Pyro, Samson, a house of prayer whose buildings have gone. The second is the medieval priory: Tironensian Benedictines from St Dogmaels, four centuries of the Office, then the silence after 1536. The third is the modern layer: Anglican Benedictines, Catholic reception, Prinknash, Cistercians from Belgium.

A visitor can walk from the landing to the old priory and then to the white abbey in a short morning. The layers do not flatten. You can still touch medieval stone. You can still see the Arts and Crafts outline of 1906 to 1910. You can still hear, if you are there at the right hour, a living choir.

Continuity here does not mean that nothing changed. Almost everything changed. The point is that prayer returned to the same ground. Different communities, different centuries, different languages, and the same desire to seek God on an island off the Welsh coast.

That is why the place is more than a pretty view. It is a short history of British Christianity walked on foot.

A Small Reflection

Continuity in the Church often looks like this: the same ground, different faces, the same prayer begun again.

People like a straight line. Caldey will not give them one. The first monastery ended. The priory was dissolved. The Anglican house became Catholic and then left. Another house came. If you only count unbroken institutions, the story looks like failure after failure. If you count the return of prayer, the story looks different.

Many Catholic lives are like that. A family faith skips a generation and comes back. A parish nearly closes and then slowly finds its feet. A vocation is delayed and later confirmed. The line is not clean. The mercy is that God can use the same ground twice.

Do not wait for a perfect continuity before you honour what has been kept.

A short prayer

Lord, thank you for every return of prayer to a place that had gone quiet. Amen.

Chapter 15

Why they converted

Obedience, not a taste for roofs.

It is possible to admire the white abbey and still miss why 1913 happened.

The monks did not become Catholic because the roofs were Italian. They did not become Catholic because Belgium would later send better chocolate. They became Catholic because they believed that the faith they were living required a Church with the authority to teach, govern, and order worship.

Catholics believe Christ gave the Church a visible authority to teach, govern and preserve unity. That claim can be stated without contempt for other Christians. It can also be avoided until a crisis makes avoidance impossible. Caldey reached that crisis when Bishop Gore asked the community to live inside Anglican limits they could not accept.

Obedience here was not a personality type. It was a theological conclusion. If the bishop who claimed authority over them could not authorise the faith they held, then either the faith or the authority had to give way. Most of the community concluded that the Catholic Church was the place where that faith and that authority belonged together.

Those who remained Anglican reached a different conclusion. This book does not treat them as a footnote. It does treat the Catholic claim as the claim the author believes. Fairness is not the same as saying both answers were equally true.

A Small Reflection

At some point belief asks a hard question: who has the authority to teach, govern, and order worship?

Modern people prefer questions of experience. How does this make me feel? Does this community suit me? Those questions are not foolish. They are not sufficient. A Church is more than a gathering of similar tastes.

Catholics believe Christ gave the Church a visible authority to teach, govern and preserve unity. That is why reception into the Church is not only a change of congregation. It is entrance into a communion that claims to bind and loose.

If that sentence is difficult, do not pretend it is only about Caldey. It is about what kind of Church you think Christ founded. The island forced the question. It did not invent it.

A short prayer

Lord, give us the courage to ask who has the right to teach us, and the humility to live with the answer. Amen.

Chapter 16

Menevia across the water

A neighbour, not a foreign romance.

Menevia is part of the tale.

It was the Catholic bishop of that Welsh see who received the community. Bishop Francis Mostyn did not collect a trophy from a distance. He came as the local Catholic bishop and took responsibility. In 1913 Caldey sat in the Diocese of Menevia. After the union of Cardiff and Menevia in 2024, the island belongs to the Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia. The local Church has changed its boundaries. The neighbourliness has not.

A bishop, in Catholic life, is not a mayor in a mitre. He is the successor of the apostles in a particular place. He ordains. He watches over the faith. He has a duty toward religious communities in his diocese, even when those communities also have their own superiors in their order. That is why Mostyn's name belongs beside Carlyle's and Gore's. Someone had to receive the house into the Catholic Church on the ground, not only in a newspaper.

For a priest who works in south Wales, Caldey is not a foreign romance. It is a neighbour who prays the Office while the mainland answers emails. The short stretch of water is a parish boundary of a kind.

I have felt that neighbourliness most clearly when I have offered Mass on the island with people from the parish. You bring ordinary names with you. The sick. The children. The dead. You set them down on an altar that stands in a very complicated Christian story. The Mass does not need the story to be simple. It needs bread, wine, a priest, and a

Church. Caldey has all of that. It also has the sea under the windows.

A Small Reflection

Catholicism is universal, but it always exists somewhere. A diocese. A bishop. A parish. A particular people. Caldey is not a floating piece of Europe that happens to be near Tenby. It belongs to the Catholic history of Wales.

Mostyn matters because conversion, if it is real, has to be received by the local Church. Rome can recognise a community. A bishop still has to stand at the altar and take pastoral responsibility. That is how the Catholic Church actually works. The universal Church is always lived in a real place, among real people.

The same is true of ordinary parish life. We do not belong to Christianity in general. We belong to a font, a tabernacle, a graveyard, and a bishop whose name we can say. That can feel small beside the romance of an island monastery. It is in fact the same logic.

When I have taken parish intentions to that altar, I have not been importing a private devotion into a historic site. I have been doing what a priest does: carrying the names of his people into the prayer of the Church.

A short prayer

Bless this local Church, Lord, and every community that prays beside the sea. Amen.

Part Four

The boat still runs

Chapter 17

Silence while the boat unloads

Visitors have one timetable. The monks have another.

The first time I stayed still on Caldey long enough to notice the silence, I understood the island better than any noticeboard had explained it.

Silence in a monastery is not the absence of people. Visitors talk. Children run. Cameras click. The shop bell goes. Underneath that noise the house keeps another rhythm. A monk crosses the yard and does not need to perform for anyone. A bell marks an hour that is not on the tourist leaflet. The Office begins whether or not the chapel is full of guests.

That is what it means to keep the hours. It means the praise of God has a time, and the time is kept even when nobody from the mainland is watching. The Psalms are central because they are the Church's oldest prayer book. They give the community words for joy, fear, anger, gratitude, and waiting. Monks do not have to invent a spiritual mood three times a day. They receive the next psalm and pray it.

Silence is not automatically holy. It exists in a monastery so that the Word of God can be heard, so that the community can remain recollected, and so that the common life does not dissolve into chatter. A person can be quiet and still be vain. A person can keep the rule of silence and still be unkind. The point is not the hush. The point is listening.

Entering that atmosphere, even briefly, is different from visiting a monument. A monument asks you to look. A living monastery asks you,

without speaking, to quieten down. You may only manage five minutes. Five minutes is already a different kind of visit.

I have sat in that quiet after Mass, when the group has gone toward the shop or the path. The island does not become empty. It becomes itself.

A Small Reflection

The monks keep the hours whether visitors are there or not. That may be the most important pastoral fact on the island.

A great deal of modern life is performed for an audience. We work where we can be seen. We sometimes pray where we can be approved. A monastery that continues the Office after the last boat has gone is doing something our culture finds hard to understand. It is being faithful without needing to be noticed.

Parish life needs the same hiddenness. Someone unlocks the church on a wet Tuesday. Someone visits the sick with no story to tell afterwards. Someone says the rosary on the bus. None of that will be widely known. All of it keeps the Church from becoming a performance.

If you take nothing else from Caldey, take this. Prayer that needs an audience is already thinner than it looks. Prayer that continues when the visitors have gone home is closer to the truth of the Gospel.

A short prayer

Lord, make us quiet enough to notice that someone is praying, and faithful enough to pray when no one is watching. Amen.

Chapter 18

Mass on the island

A complicated history, a simple altar.

To celebrate Holy Mass on Caldey is to stand inside a long argument and then to do something older than the argument.

The history is complicated. Early Welsh monks. Medieval Benedictines. A dissolved priory. Anglican hope. Catholic reception. Belgian Cistercians. Fire. Chocolate. Boats. If you tried to explain all of that in the opening greeting of Mass, you would never reach the Gospel.

The history remains complicated, but the Church can still celebrate Mass there. The Mass takes bread and wine and does what the Church has done since the beginning. On an island with such a tangled Christian past, that simplicity is a mercy. You do not have to solve 1536 or 1913 before you can pray. You have to be present. Christ is present. The rest of the story gathers around that fact rather than replacing it.

For a priest, there is a particular weight in saying the words of consecration in a house that once had to argue about reservation and Benediction. Those old disputes were about Eucharistic doctrine, practice, and authority: how Christ in the Sacrament may be reserved, adored, and used to bless the people. Standing at that altar, you are no longer arguing. You are doing the thing the argument was about.

When I have offered Mass there with parish groups, I have tried not to turn the Mass into a commentary on historical disputes. The Eucharist is more than a way of settling an old quarrel. We came by boat. We will go home by boat. For an hour we are not in charge of the timetable. We bring the sick, the children, and the dead, and we set them

down before the Lord.

A Small Reflection

The Church can survive a complicated history without needing to simplify it before worship can continue.

Caldey would be a poor place to wait for a tidy narrative. The layers do not flatten. Anglicans and Catholics still read 1913 differently. The Dissolution still hurts one side of the memory and is barely noticed on the other. Meanwhile the altar is prepared, the missal is opened, and the same words are said.

This is not an argument for forgetting history. It is an argument for refusing to let history become a condition of prayer. Christ gives himself under the appearances of bread and wine in a Church that has been through more than any island can summarise.

If you remember only one thing from a Mass on Caldey, let it be this: the old argument was about him, and he is still here.

A short prayer

Lord Jesus, on every altar, simple or famous, do what you have always done. Make us thankful. Amen.

Chapter 19

Whether it worked

A better question than it first appears.

People ask whether the conversion worked.

If the measure is a perfect abbot and a full choir forever, no conversion works. Carlyle was a founder, not a finished saint of the cloister. Founders are often like that. If the measure is a house that never ran out of money, then 1913 did not work. The Benedictines had to leave.

If the measure is whether Catholic monastic life took root, the answer is more careful. It took root, then it had to move inland, then another Catholic family arrived and stayed. The Office continued, but not in a straight line and not without fire, debt, and few vocations. Numbers, money, buildings, and stability matter. They are not the only measures.

The 1913 reception did not guarantee financial security, perfect leadership, or permanent residence on Caldey. It did become part of a continuing Catholic monastic story. That story includes Prinknash as well as Caldey. It includes the Cistercians who accepted an unfinished inheritance. It includes the Anglican Benedictines who continued elsewhere. History is more complex than a single success or a single failure.

That is a better question for religious houses, and for much Christian work. We ask whether a community worked, whether a foundation worked, whether a year worked. We usually mean: did it look successful? Caldey suggests another measure alongside the practical ones. Did prayer

continue? Did anyone keep the night watch? Did the place remain turned toward God when the photographs were finished?

A Small Reflection

Christians need more than one way of measuring success. Caldey will not let us use only one.

Money matters. A community that cannot pay its way will not last, however sincere its prayer. Leadership matters. A gifted founder can raise a house and still be the wrong man to govern it for fifty years. Stability matters. An island monastery that depends on summer visitors lives closer to the edge than a guidebook admits.

Prayer matters too, and not as a decoration on top of those facts. If the hours had stopped for good in 1928, the white roofs would now be a different kind of ruin. They did not stop. Another community took up the work. That is not the only measure of 1913. It is one that our usual language of success is poorly equipped to notice.

A religious house can fail in public and still have been true. It can also succeed in public and still have lost its purpose. The monks on Caldey do not settle that puzzle for us. They only keep it honest. Look at the books. Then look at whether anyone is still praying.

A short prayer

Teach us a better measure than success alone. Teach us to care both for the house and for the hours. Amen.

Chapter 20

An outing that could be a pilgrimage

How you receive the place.

A trip to Caldey is easy to treat as an outing. The boat, the shop, the view, the return in time for supper in Tenby.

You can take the same boat as a small pilgrimage instead. Look at the old priory as well as the shop. Hear, if you can, a fragment of the Office. Remember that the white walls were an Anglican act of hope before they were a Catholic address. Buy the chocolate if you like. Then pray for the men who live where the visitors do not sleep.

The difference is less about where you go than about how you receive the place. A tourist can become a pilgrim by slowing down, entering the church, respecting silence, and learning what the monastery is. Nobody needs to announce the change. Attention is enough.

An island monastery that depends on summer feet is always one quiet winter from needing friends. Pilgrimage, in that sense, is not only a mood. It is a way of spending the day that leaves the house stronger than you found it. Pay honestly. Do not treat the monks as scenery. Keep your voice down near the church. If the house is closed to visitors at certain hours, accept the closed door. The closed door is part of why the island is still a monastery.

A Small Reflection

The difference between an outing and a pilgrimage is often attention. The ticket can be the same. The day can look the same from the outside. What changes is whether the place is allowed to ask something of you.

Caldey is used to people who come for the view. It can also receive people who come to pray. The island does not need us to be solemn all afternoon. It does need us not to treat a living monastery as a backdrop. Children may still want chocolate. Adults may still talk about the return boat. Somewhere in the day there can be five quiet minutes in the church.

That is practical, not precious. Keep your voice down. Accept a closed door. Pay for what you buy. Say a prayer for the men who will still be there after you have gone back to Tenby. None of that makes you a great pilgrim. It makes you a decent guest.

Most holy places in Britain now live between tourism and prayer. The question is not whether visitors should come. They should. The question is whether anyone among them will look up long enough to notice that the house has another purpose.

A short prayer

Lord, teach us to receive holy places with attention, and to leave them stronger than we found them. Amen.

Chapter 21

Salt on the Rule

The climate was never the promise.

The cold in the name is honest.

Monastic life on an exposed island is not a poster. Wind. Crossing. Illness. Few vocations. A fire. A language that is not the language of the first brothers. Belgium to Wales is a long translation. The Rule does not promise a mild climate. It promises a way to seek God with other men who have made the same costly promise.

Inconvenience is not automatically spiritually good. The point is not to seek discomfort. The point is to accept the ordinary difficulties that belong to a vocation. On Caldey those difficulties include weather, boats, isolation, and the practical work of keeping a house alive. The monks accept that as part of the life they have chosen. The sea does not need to be turned into a sermon. It is simply there.

I have felt that teaching in small ways. Waiting for a boat. Getting cold. Watching plans depend on weather. Offering one discomfort without a speech. The island is good at such lessons because it does not need to invent them.

A Small Reflection

Every vocation has inconveniences that belong to it. They are not the meaning of the vocation. They are the weather in which the vocation has to be lived.

A monk on Caldey accepts wind and crossings because he has accepted the island. A parent accepts broken sleep because he has accepted the child. A parish priest accepts administration because he has accepted the people. Seeking those difficulties for their own sake would be strange. Pretending they are an accident to be removed as soon as holiness arrives is also strange.

The Gospel does not ask us to collect discomfort. It asks us to be faithful inside the life we have actually been given. Sometimes that life is cold. Sometimes it is delayed by a cancelled boat. Sometimes it is a fire in 1940 and a long rebuild. None of that is a proof of virtue. It is the material virtue has to work with.

If you take the boat this year and the wind is hard, you do not need to extract a lesson before you reach the landing. You only need to notice that the men who live there have already said yes to this climate.

A short prayer

Lord, help us to accept the ordinary difficulties that belong to the life we have chosen, without pretending that discomfort is the same as holiness.

Amen.

Chapter 22

If the wind is right

The monks are still praying.

If you remember one thing, remember the boat.

A community thought it could be fully monastic and fully Anglican on a Welsh island. A bishop asked them to choose. Most of them entered the Catholic Church and were received by the bishop of the local Catholic see. The house they built proved too heavy. Another house of monks, Cistercian and quieter, took the island and is there yet.

You can visit Caldey as a tourist. You can buy chocolate. You can admire the buildings. You can take photographs. All of that is allowed. But if you stop for a moment, you may realise that the most important thing happening on the island is something you cannot put in a photograph. People are still praying.

The island's greatest treasure is not the chocolate, the architecture, or even the history. It is the fact that the Church still prays there.

That is not a victory march. It is a neighbour story. Off the coast of Wales, after conversions, departures, fires, debts, visitors and shops, monastic prayer continues. The mainland can remember that. The monks do not need us to hear them in order to keep the hours. We may need to remember that the hours are being kept.

A Small Reflection

After all the conversions, departures, fires, debts, visitors and shops, people are still praying on Caldey. That is the quiet ending, and it is the right one.

Books about holy places often want a last paragraph that gathers every thread into a moral. Caldey does not need that. The living fact is enough. A small community of Cistercian monks still rises to pray on an island that has been Celtic, medieval, Anglican, Catholic Benedictine, and Cistercian. The white roofs are still there. The old priory is still there. The boat still runs when the weather allows.

You may never go. You may go only once. You may go and buy chocolate and forget the rest until some later winter. None of that cancels the hours. The Church does not maintain Caldey as a lesson for visitors. The monks maintain it as a house of God.

Different communities came and went, but monastic prayer returned and continues today. If these pages have done their work, you now know why the monks are still there.

A short prayer

Lord, bless the men who keep the hours on Caldey, and teach us to be grateful that the Church is still praying there. Amen.

A letter to the reader

If you close this book and only remember chocolate, think of the boat again.

The white roofs were an Anglican hope. The reception in 1913 was a costly honesty. The Cistercians are the ones who stayed when the first Catholic family had to go inland. Wales has few stories as strange and as close.

A parish on the mainland can live for years without mentioning the island. The island keeps the hours whether it is mentioned or not.

I have been there. I have prayed there. I have said Mass there. I have also been an ordinary visitor, with salt on my coat from the crossing. If these pages make you want to take the boat, go. If they make you want to be quieter on the mainland, that is a kind of pilgrimage too.

The most important thing on Caldey is still invisible. Men are keeping the hours. The Church is still praying on a cold island. That is enough reason to bless the place, and enough reason to go home changed.

Sources and further reading

This book is written for ordinary readers, not as an academic monograph. The main claims can be checked in the following places.

The island and the abbey The official Caldey Island history at caldeyislandwales.com; the Caldey entry of the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance at ocso.org; the listing for the Abbey Church of Our Lady and St Samson in *Taking Stock: Catholic Churches of England and Wales*.

Early names and traditions The Welsh name *Ynys Byr* is tied to *Pyro* (*Piro*) in the early *Life of St Samson* and in later Welsh tradition. The English name *Caldey* is Norse. The common explanation is “cold island”; the island’s own account also notes a possible link with a spring. Early saints’ lives are not modern biographies, and Viking destruction of the first monastery is possible rather than certain.

The medieval priory Standard accounts of the Tironensian foundation from *St Dogmaels* in the twelfth century, and of the Dissolution in 1536, including local architectural studies of the old priory and *St David’s Church*.

The Anglican community and 1913 The published correspondence between *Dom Aelred Carlyle* and *Bishop Charles Gore*, conveniently gathered at anglicanhistory.org/misc/caldey.html. *Rene M. Kollar*, “Anglo-Catholicism in the Church of England, 1895–1913: *Abbot Aelred Carlyle and the Monks of Caldey Island*,” *Harvard Theological Review* 76 (1983). Contemporary notices in *The Tablet*, 15 March 1913, and *The Universe*, 14 March 1913. *Peter F. Anson’s* writings on the Benedictines of Caldey remain useful, if dated in tone. *Pluscarden Abbey’s The Caldey Conversion* (2013) gathers letters and first-hand accounts of the reception.

Marmion, profession and ordination The published chronology of Abbot Columba Marmion; Carlyle's audience with Pius X in May 1913; the clothing and canonical establishment on 29 June 1913; solemn vows at Maredsous in June 1914; priestly ordination on 5 July 1914.

Later houses The Anglican remnant at Pershore and, from 1926, Nashdom. The Catholic Benedictine move to Prinknash in 1928. The Cistercian foundation from Scourmont (Chimay) in 1929; the fire of 25 September 1940; priory status in 1934; abbey status on 15 September 1959.

The local Church Bishop Francis Mostyn of Menevia received the community in 1913. Caldey now lies in the Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia, created by the union of Cardiff and Menevia on 12 September 2024.

Where memoirs disagree by a few days about the exact date of reception, this book notes the discrepancy and follows the commonly cited Catholic date of 5 March 1913 for the formal reception by Bishop Mostyn, without pretending that every memoir uses the same day.

Personal passages describe only the author's own visits: the boat from Tenby, walking the island, praying with the monks, offering Mass with parish groups, keeping silence, and buying the monastery chocolate.



Silent Homilies

A word of thanks

If these pages have given you a neighbour you did not know you had — an island, a boat, a house of prayer still keeping the hours — thank you for reading.

There is no charge for the book. If you wish to support the writing of *Silent Homilies*, any gift is voluntary and received with thanks. It helps a priest on the Welsh mainland keep writing the local stories that guidebooks flatten. Please give only if you wish, and only if you can.

www.silenthomilies.com

Printing tip

This book is designed in A5 format. For best results print double-sided on A5 paper, flipped on the short edge. Recommended paper: 80–100 gsm.