

Connections with the Natural World



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Kevin lived as a hermit in the south of Ireland in the early 7th century. In his vocation to seek God, Kevin chose to live fully dependent upon and engaged with his environment. Nature was to be embraced as the place to experience God. Once, whilst praying in stillness and silence, a blackbird settled upon the palm of his hand. She began to build her nest. Kevin faced a choice: to withdraw his offer of openness before this availability became too costly or to value the fragility of this encounter above his own comfort, to hold his exact posture ... for a long time! For Kevin, as this beautiful story recounts, the initial, humbling thrill gave way to endurance, pain and sustained commitment. Through what had now become an extended prayer-time, Kevin's aching open hand mirrored his open heart to God. He held the nest until the chicks learnt to fly.

Kevin's costly hospitality speaks to us in a way facts and figures cannot. As God reveals to us the treasures of His creation should we simply catalogue them that we might 'own' them, to marvel and move on? Rather, here is a challenge to hold an open hand to the increasingly fragile world of which we are a part. We learn to value God's creation, glimpsing His value of us.

In the words of a traditional Irish blessing, we draw together both the challenge of Kevin's costly nurturing care and God's tender care for us:

May God hold you in the hollow of God's hand.

