

Poems of Celtic Spirituality

Kenneth Steven

Kenneth lives in Dunkeld in Perthshire. He is not only a poet, but a children's author, novelist and translator, and he has made a number of highly-regarded radio programmes. His collections include Columba, Iona and Wild Horses. This poem, Clonmacnoise, is from his latest work Salt and Light which is largely inspired by the Celtic Christian world. Some of the poems re-create the early Celtic days in Ireland and Western Scotland, while others are concerned with the finding of God's presence in our lives amidst the ordinary and the everyday. His publisher is Saint Andrew Press and you can find out more about him at www.kennethsteven.co.uk

Clonmacnoise

Wrapped in the wool of winter

The fields breathed with frost

Even the Sannon confused

Searching in ribbons through the fields

The sun straining to see

Life a single frozen eye

We came to Clonmacnoise

Fifteen hundred years too late

Crows in the ivied silence of round towers

Gravestones bent as though in penitence

Chapels fallen in upon themselves
Like broken faith

And yet I could imagine
In the once upon a time of Ireland

Men awakening to break the wells
To bring in steamings of white water

Keeping the turf fire's glow
Storm after December's storm

Here where they had caught God's light
(So fragile, yet alive for ever)

To bear it bright
Out into the dark places of the earth