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## *Inner Peace or Chaos: Your Choice*

**A sermon by Canon Carolynne Williams**  
**Proper 7 – Year B**

There are pilgrims from this parish who recently returned from the Isle of Iona off of the Western coast of Scotland. We were on a journey with John Philip and Ali Newell. John Philip has lectured twice at St. Philip during the previous years and has brought a deep perspective of Celtic Spirituality. Other pilgrims have studied on Iona as well from this parish community.

We were learning about the community of Iona, which has an international presence, and the influence of Christianity on this community reflecting historically the fourth and fifth centuries up through the eleventh century and beyond. The history revealed a time of turmoil and barbarianism during the time of the Vikings. The physical evidence, the ruins remaining, show the conviction of those who were at war against Christianity and its influence down through the centuries.

Iona today is reflective of a community of peace and love focusing on creation and the commitment of the people living in community which reflects the love of God. There are several chapters of this community in other parts of the world including the United States, which are reflective of Celtic Spirituality.

It is a land of creativity, love in action through their living from day to day. The community is growing in their commitment to God and are growing in their spirituality and love for God.

Thus, they are growing in their love for their fellow man, fellow woman, and the stranger.

We participated in one tourist activity. That activity involved us taking a boat to Staffa, a neighboring island, where the only inhabitants are birds and other living things of creation.



The sight line of the island was so different in its appearance. Many in the group commented on not having seen this type of terrain anywhere before. God's creation. Also, the Island was filled with an inlet or two. Above the inlets were covered mounds and rocks of pink marble. God's creation. The mountains were millions of years old.

The boat ride to Staffa took place on an afternoon when the weather was good and the Atlantic was calm. The sun was shining, the waters were many colors of blue and green and the forecast was good for the rest of the afternoon on that day. Calm waters and silky seas were predicted.

This information was received by all affected. A sense of calm and anticipation filled the air. Nature was at its best. There are those who believe that God has authority over nature. They were in evidence as we moved across the ocean.

If one reflects on the weather in this country alone over the previous year, a debate would be in order. The diversity of the weather, that has affected us all, has touched every part of this nation with unpredictability and chaos.

Our gospel story points directly to the disciples and their experience of being with Jesus in the boat. They were working. They were not tourist. They were fishing and seeking another place to fish. The fish were plentiful. The disciples had to feed families and supply the local eatery with the catch of the day.

“As Jesus and his disciples are crossing the Sea of Galilee, they were moving from side to side of the sea. The side that was not their side.”

They were moving from what was familiar to what was not familiar.

“This is a story about life. It’s a story about faith. It is a story about fear. Faith, life, and fear usually go together. They are not separated as we live. Sometimes the sea of life is rough. The wind is strong. The waves are high. The boat is taking on water and is about to sink. Each of us has a storm story. Our storm story may began with a telephone call, a doctor’s appointment, or news we did not anticipate or want to hear. Storms happen. Storms of loss and sorrow. Storms of suffering. Storms of disappointment and regret. Storms of loneliness. Storms of depression. Storms of depression. Storms of uncertainty and second guessing. Storms of suicide thoughts. Storms are about changing conditions and life awareness.” (Brainwave #611)

Life can be completely overwhelming and feel as if it is out of control, especially when circumstances don’t go our way. The water seems to be getting deeper and a new horizon possibility is somewhere in the distant future.

The inner storm is the one that disturbs us the most. To others we may appear to be in a place of peace, but often there is the possibility that our interior is not as we want it to be. Our thoughts take us to places that are not good and healthy. That is why one has to guard their mind and heart, as it states in Ephesians 6:10-18.

Jesus with his disciples is asleep in the boat. He is resting his head on a pillow. The weather is changing and Jesus seems to be completely unaware. The disciples see what is happening with the sea. They began to panic. Their emotions take over and they are getting angry at this man called Jesus. They are so worried about their future that one of them says, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (Mark 4:38).

In other words, do something to calm this storm and give us the sense of peace that we had being with you and following you. You promised us peace.

Peace be still. Jesus speaks to the sea and calms the wind. Jesus demonstrates to the disciples and to us, the followers of Jesus today, a possibility. A possibility that is there for those who will receive this place that only the Christ can give through grace. A place of peace and love.

He invites us to come to the altar and partake of the nourishment that is offered to one who partakes. Come to the altar and have supper with me. Come and do not be afraid.

The disciples asked: “Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (Mark 4:41).

Come to my table and have supper with me. We are invited to come to the table. It will bring refreshment and renewal. The embrace of inner peace is ever present. How do we know this? When we reach to connect with the presence of the almighty, a sense of calm prevails. This calm and rest prevails in the midst of divisions and hostility.

The walls of hostility are eventually crumbled when peace is sought. It takes scores of years sometimes. Sometimes one generation hands the mantle over to the next. Through it all faith in God continues to sustain us and the face of

reconciliation will prevail. "The peace of empires is not true peace." True peace is found in the prevailing presence of God. Always.

God is a loving benefactor offering all people a stake in salvation.

*The written words of this spoken sermon may not reflect all of the words that were preached.*

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