

An apparition

Gillian Cooper reflects on Luke 24:36b-48

There's talk, there are rumours. Some of them have seen angels. Some have heard angels. They need to talk about it, sort it out in their heads. So instead of heading for home, some of the disciples gather together and share stories. Something odd is happening, something very unsettling, even alarming.

And then they see the ghost. It must be a ghost. Jesus is dead, that they know. Somehow they have summoned this frightening apparition. Even when the ghost speaks, even when a familiar voice says the familiar greeting, "Peace be with you", even then they are terrified. But this is a ghost you can't see through. He looks like a person. He has the marks of

his death on him. He can even eat. And yet they know that he is dead.

What are we to make of the resurrection of Jesus, we who have not seen the solidity of this ghost? For centuries the best theological minds in the world have tackled this question, and we can draw on their wisdom. But the story itself also speaks to us. It tells us that the risen Jesus is the crucified Jesus. The miracle has happened. Death has not been able to keep him. Our own risen life will not look like this, but this has made it possible, because death has been defeated by God's love. God's love incarnate is a living person. This is no ghost, but rather the one who holds out to us the promise of eternal life. ☺

God of the living and the dead, we give you thanks that in Christ you have opened for us the way through death to the joys of eternal life. Keep us, we pray, in your love, that we may, at the last, know fullness of life in your kingdom. Amen.

Holy places

Inner Farne

by Heather Smith

Although the closest of the Farne Islands to the Northumberland mainland, Inner Farne is wild and windswept. Now owned by the National Trust, it houses the remains of a seventh-century anchorite cell and the fourteenth-century St Cuthbert's Chapel.

You can reach it by boat from Seahouses, accompanied by nature lovers who come to see the puffins, or those who want to visit the Longstone Lighthouse, from where

Grace Darling famously rowed to the wrecked *Forfarshire* in 1838.

St Cuthbert lived here between 676 and 684. He dug out a well and constructed a round building with a straw roof containing a prayer oratory. The chapel that exists today was built in 1370 and probably stands on the same spot as the oratory. Cuthbert left when he was elected Bishop of Lindisfarne, but returned soon after and died here in 687.

The Venerable Bede recorded a legendary story of otters who came to warm and dry St Cuthbert's feet after he had been praying in the sea all night.

At the far end of the island you can find a quiet spot to experience the majesty of God's creation in this wild place. ☺



Alseberg, Belgium, 1895 – resurrected Jesus and the apostles

Figures from the *Common Worship* lectionary

Anselm – monk, theologian and Archbishop of Canterbury

by Julian Smith

Anselm (c. 1033-1109) is commemorated on Wednesday. He was a young man of deep faith and an enquiring mind, who found his spiritual and intellectual home at the Abbey of Bec in Normandy. He rose to

become prior and later abbot, and under Anselm the abbey became renowned for its scholarship.

As a theologian Anselm was one of the key figures in the Western Church. He sought to explore the nature of, and our relationship with, God. In his book *Why God Became Man* Anselm propounded an idea of the meaning and purpose of Jesus' death.

Anselm's appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury was dogged by the ongoing quarrel between the crown and the papacy about authority over the Church in England. He was exiled twice, spending his time studying and reconciling conflicting churches.

Anselm wrote, "I believe in order to understand" and reminds us that we are called to explore the infinite richness and variety of God. ☺

“The aim of prayer, in fact, is to attain that point where we do the will of God, not that God should do our will.”

Enzo Bianchi (born 1943), Italian writer