

MONMOUTHSHIRE 40p Wednesday, October 2, 2013

# Free Press

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Dear Friends,  
A MILE and a half wide and two miles long, situated off Tenby and accessible only by the small boats that take around 55,000 tourists across every year from the mainland, and back home again by the end of the day. Unless, like me, you had a sabbatical and could spend a whole week.

Yes, I am talking about Caldey Island, one of Britain's holy islands, and inhabited by a Cistercian order of monks who continue a tradition that started in the sixth century. A tradition of prayer, quiet contemplation, a deep-rooted love for community and the individuals in it, and a welcoming heart for visitors. I know. I got to know them and respect them. And I feel I have returned to 'normality' with the tenderness and loving kindness of the Caldey monks in my heart.

My good friend and colleague from Caldicot parish church, the Reverend Lyndon Harrison, has not long returned from a trip to the island with some of his flock, and they returned with greetings from

Brother Titus, the guest master. People like me are not born with a dog collar, nor are monks born to a life of solitude and round-the-clock prayer. We, they, sense a calling, and that calling can come at any time of our lives and often at the most surprising of circumstances. And we decide to answer that call or ignore it, and perhaps we ask God to come back another day or – better still – find someone else. Many of the monks have had to make great sacrifices to answer their calls, and life is not always 'easy' for them even now (is it ever?). Still they stuck by their choice, trusting God to guide them and inspire them.

When you visit Caldey Island, you feel God's presence. Regardless of whether you are inside the monastery or out and about walking the island. Every step you take and every breath you breathe are God-filled as a result of centuries of people – and monks – living and worshipping and visiting this holy place. God bless you.

**Preben**

Thought for the weak



with the Rev Preben Andersen