22nd September 2025

Stones

"Jesus answered and said, 'I tell you they if they keep quiet, the stones themselves will start shouting aloud.'"

Bible, *Luke 19:40 (Good News Bible translation)*

Following my reflection yesterday on stones in strong walls, I did two things. Firstly, I went back to a poem by John Betjeman, *Ireland with Emily,* from a book entitled "New Bats in Old Belfries", published in 1945.

Stony seaboard, far and foreign,
Stony hills poured over space,
Stony outcrop of the Burren,
Stones in every fertile place,
Little fields with boulders dotted,
Grey-stone shoulders, saffron-spotted,
Stone-walled cabins thatched with reeds,
Where a Stone Age people breeds
The last of Europe's stone age race.

Betjeman is reflecting on the stones around him on his travels, stones that speak to him of romance and history, identity and heritage. The stones tell him what Ireland is like, and who its people are.

Then, I took myself to my church, whose walls had encouraged me to write the poem *Stones* which I touched on yesterday. And as I kept quiet for a time, I listened to these stones, just as Betjeman had done, and I heard them shouting aloud. The big stones spoke to me of those whose commitment and purpose gives them a place in these walls: preachers and teachers; carers and visionaries; organisers and activists. The little stones, packed into the walls, spoke to me of fellowship, people binding together, each one with a place and purpose, everyone important. "Look at our differences of colour and shape," the stones also shouted. For these were rough stones, jagged, ill-formed, yet fitted together by the skill of a mason's hands, still doing their job, after a hundred and twenty years, solid on their foundations, keeping the Church in place.

"And why are we here?" they asked me, as I sat in silent contemplation. "What does our history, shape, colour, uniqueness, togetherness speak of, here and now for you?" And I found my voice, and answered the stones: "Thank you, for giving me a place to be."

A prayer for today

Even the stones shout aloud and tell me of the Truth of God's Word. Amen and Amen

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