

# Munghu & Friends

1st February, 2016

## Welcome -

Launde Abbey exists as a place of spiritual hospitality; receive the welcome of this place.

A team of people have made it the calling of their lives to make this a place of welcome; receive the fruit of their labour and prayer.

A worshipping community maintains a rhythm of prayer in this place; allow yourself to tap into that spiritual momentum, to be carried along with it.

## Introductions -

Who we are.

## The goal of the day -

Our goal for today is that at the end of this time together we can look each other in the eye and say, 'God had a good day today'.

What will enable us to say this?

God's greatest desire is to commune and connect with us - the children that He loves.

There is a text in Genesis:

*'Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day.'* (Gen 3:8 NIV).

In that state of unbroken communion between God and Adam & Eve, God just drops by to hang out, to take a stroll at the end of the day.

Perhaps the conversation ran along the lines of - Tell me about your day, what did you do, what was good about today, what was a challenge?

Just friends, hanging out together, and sharing their lives - a picture of closeness, intimacy, and communion.

God loves us and He simply wants to fellowship with us. This communion with God is both the GOAL and the FOUNDATION of the Church. Out of this its life flows, to this it seeks to lead its members.

I became a Christian at the age of 4. At the age of 28 I realised, like a kick to the stomach, that I couldn't honestly say that I loved God. I believed in Him, I sought to obey Him, I sought to serve Him. But I didn't love Him. The worst sinners are the ones who break the most important commandments and Jesus tells us what the most important commandment is,

*Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your*

*mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment.<sup>1</sup>*

I then spent the following weeks, months and years praying, asking the Holy Spirit to help me love God.

That love relationship, is expressed in communion, is sustained in communion, and that is what will energise and inspire and empower our service in the world.

We have all taken a dangerous step crossing the threshold of home this morning - giving a day to God and to a transforming encounter with Him.

Maybe there are things that you need to put out of your mind in order to be fully present to God today? They may be legitimate concerns, but for this day to be useful and fruitful, you need to put them down and not take them up again until you get home.

SILENCE + PRAYER

*God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few<sup>2</sup>*

There are often too many words.

We want to give you words to feed the silence.

There is a one verse alternative meditation option for these talks.

**Alternative to talk 1 -**

*'When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, she turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat it to get it back onto the road<sup>3</sup>*

We are told later that God opened the mouth of the donkey so she could speak, but God did not open her eyes so she could see the angel - she already had that capacity of spiritual perception.

**Alternative to talk 2 -**

*And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 22:37-38 NIV

<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastes 5:2 NIV

<sup>3</sup> Numbers 22:23 NIV

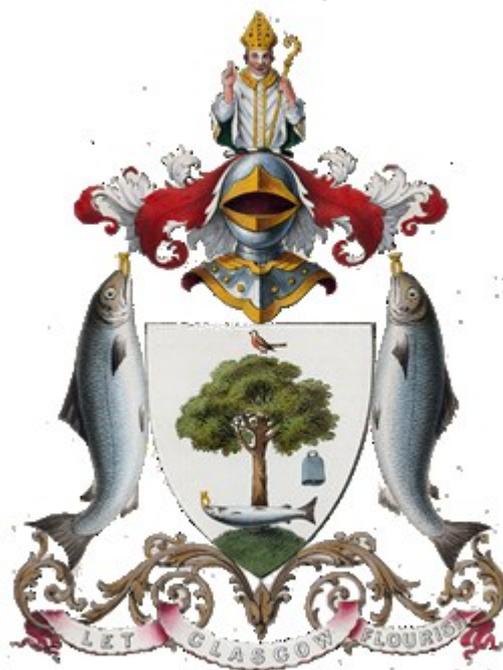
<sup>4</sup> 1 Samuel 23:16 NIV

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## Outline of the day -

- 9.30 Arrival, coffee and tea
- 10.00 Opening prayers, first talk
- 10.30 Silence
- 12.00 Midday Prayer
- 12.15 Lunch
- 1.00 Second talk
- 1.20 Silence
- 2.45 Group reflection on the day
- 3.30 Eucharist
- 4.00 Tea and depart



## Using the silence

1. Do nothing at all... sit or kneel or lie down... and wait for God to lead, to speak, to put ideas and thoughts and prayers into the mind. Relax and rest. If literally doing nothing at all is impossible, do something creative with the hands.
2. Use something to 'spark off prayer'... the Bible, the hymn-book, phrases or short prayers... use something quite short and dwell on it. Read books about prayer or a book of prayers, being prepared to stop reading in order to pray.
3. Walk about in the garden, thinking, taking no notice of anyone else, being aware of God.
4. Stay in the chapel and use the time for your own usual prayers, with the added help that there is more time than usual.
5. Use the time to pray for others... perhaps a few, or only one (not a long list). Bring them to God to share his presence with you in the quietness.
6. Face up to yourself and your particular needs, knowing that God will deal with these if you give him time and room. Do not dwell only on the need but on the receiving of help.
7. A very practical and active use of the time could be to think out deliberately your own present method and practice of prayer (private and public worship habits). Plan afresh if necessary... write down ideas to try out. If the present pattern is unsatisfactory, now is your chance to do something about it. Remember, if you make an ideal plan you will not necessarily be able to keep to it perfectly, but it is worth a try.
8. If all else fails, do not feel guilty if you do something that does not seem an ideal use of time. If none of these suggestions appeals to you, and you don't find a better way of spending the time, talk to someone about it and decide why it has been unprofitable.

### A brief biography of Saint Munghu (Kentigern)

Languoreth, a sixth century Queen of Strathclyde, embarked on an affair with a young soldier.

News of the adulterous Queen's behaviour reached the King. The King did not want to believe in her infidelity, but the Queen had made the mistake of giving her lover a ring which had been a present from the King - and when he saw it on the young man's finger his patience snapped.

Taking the soldier on a hunting expedition, the King plied him with drink until he fell asleep. The King then removed the ring and threw it into the river. He later angrily confronted his wife and demanded the impossible, that she produce the ring by dinner that evening.

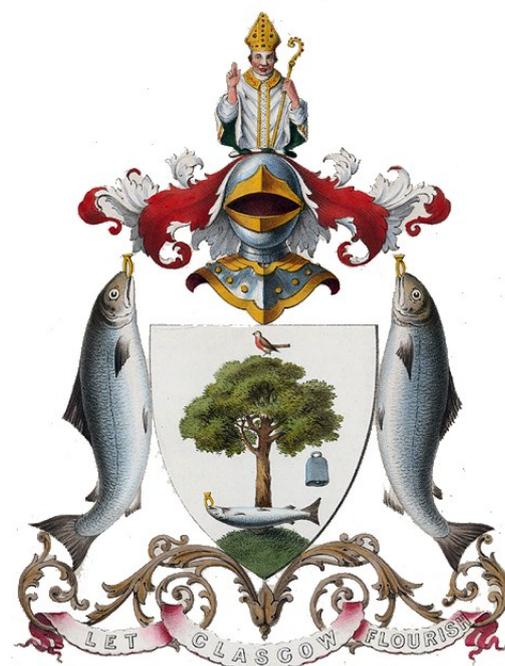
In a panic, the Queen pleaded with the holy man Munghu for help. When he heard of her plight, Munghu immediately dispatched a messenger to the Clyde and ordered him to bring back the first fish he caught.

The messenger quickly caught a salmon and rushed it back to Munghu. When it was cut open the ring lay inside, and was given straight away to the grateful Queen.

The story has been passed down through the generations, and explains why the Glasgow coat of arms prominently features three salmon, each holding a ring in its mouth.

It is one of four "miracles" performed by St Munghu, which are remembered in the following verse:

*Here is the bird that never flew  
Here is the tree that never grew  
Here is the bell that never rang  
Here is the fish that never swam*



Jocelin of Furness wrote a biography of Munghu around 1185. In this we are told that Munghu's mother was Princess Theneva daughter of Loth, the King who ruled an area centred on today's East Lothian.

After an illicit encounter with her cousin, the Princess fell pregnant.

Her unamused father had her tied to a chariot and launched off a cliff. Miraculously the chariot landed softly. The populace, now believing Theneva also to be a witch, cast her adrift in a coracle without oars on the River Forth.

She drifted up-river and came ashore at Culross in Fife, where her baby was born. She called him Kentigern - a Gaelic name which means "Chief Lord".

Mother and child were looked after at a religious establishment run in Culross by Saint Serf, who gave the boy the pet name Munghu - "my friend" or "dear one".

Munghu was special from an early age.

When classmates killed the pet robin belonging to Saint Serf, Munghu miraculously brought it back to life (the bird that never flew).

On another occasion he was in charge of ensuring the flames of a holy fire in Saint Serf's monastery remained lit, but while he slept jealous rivals extinguished the fire. Munghu then blew on a hazel branch which burst into flames and re-ignited it (the tree that never grew).

As for "the bell that never rang", it was a miraculous instrument said to have been brought back

from Rome by Munghu and which was used in services to mourn the dead.

By most accounts Munghu arrived in Glasgow around 540, when in his early twenties, and he established a monastery on the banks of the Molendinar Burn, a tributary of the Clyde.

When a pagan King invaded the land Munghu was obliged to flee to Wales where he stayed some time with St David (around 543).

After some time the Prince of Denbighshire, Cathwallain, bestowed upon him some land on which he built the monastery and school of Elgwy.

When the political situation permitted Munghu to return to his bishopric in Scotland around 560; he left the monastery and school that he had established in Wales to the care of Saint Asaph (after whom the town that grew up around the settlement came to be named).

Returning North and resuming his work, Munghu lived a most austere lifestyle and converted many to Christianity.

Munghu named the community which grew up around him "Clas-gu" (the dear family) and this grew into the city of Glasgow.

The symbols of Munghu's miracles - the bird, tree, bell and fish - form the four elements of the crest of Glasgow City Council.

St Munghu is also responsible for the motto of his city, based on his original prayer:

*"Lord let Glasgow flourish through the preaching of thy word and praising thy name."*

Since 1699 this has been shortened to "Let Glasgow flourish".

Jocelin claims that Munghu met Saint Columba and the two embraced and exchanged pastoral staves.

Munghu preached until he was well into his 80s and is said to have died in his bath on 13 January, believed AD 614.

Glasgow Cathedral was built in his honour on the spot where he was buried and was a site of pilgrimage until the Reformation. His tomb can still be visited there.

His memory has survived even in the fictionalised world of Harry Potter in which he is the patron saint of St Munghu's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries.

He was canonised and became the Patron Saint of Glasgow with a feast day on the 13th January.

## How to bless a boar



The following story from the life of Saint Munghu took place while he was in exile in Wales with Saint David.

*And when Saint Munghu had abode there some time, the fame concerning him shining forth, ran through the ears and mouths of the many, and led him to much familiarity and friendship, not only with the poor, the middle class, and the nobility of that land, but even with King Cathwallain, who reigned in that country.*

*For the king, knowing him to be a holy and righteous man, heard him willingly, and after hearing him, did much which concerned the good of his own soul.*

*And when, on the occasion of the king from time to time inquiring, he expounded the causes why he left his native land, and said he would wish to live near, and have the means of building a monastery where he might unite together a people acceptable of God, and devoted to good works, the king replied, "My land is in thy sight : wheresoever it suiteth thee, and seemeth good in thy sight, there construct the habitation of thy dwelling-place, there build thy monastery."*

*Thus the most holy Munghu ... gave no sound sleep to his eyes, nor quiet rest to his eyelids, until he found a place fit for building a tabernacle to the Lord, the God of Jacob.*

*With a great crowd of his disciples along with him, he went round the land and walked throughout it, exploring the situations of the localities, the quality of the air, the richness of the soil, the sufficiency of the meadows, pastures, and woods, and the other things that look to the convenience of a monastery to be erected.*

*And while they went together over abrupt mountains, hollow valleys, caves of the earth, thickset briers, dark woods, and open glades in the forest, as they went along, they discoursed as to what seemed necessary for the occasion, when lo and behold a single wild boar from the wood, entirely white, met them, and approaching the feet of the saint, moving his head, sometimes advancing a*

*little, and then returning and looking backwards, motioned to the saint and to his companions, with such gesture as he could, to follow him.*

*On seeing this they wondered and glorified God, who worketh marvellous things, and things past finding out in His creatures. Then step by step they followed their leader, the boar, which preceded them.*

*When they came to the place which the Lord had predestinated for them, the boar halted, and frequently striking the ground with his foot, and making the gesture of tearing up the soil of the little hill that was there with his long tusk, shaking his head repeatedly and grunting, he clearly showed to all that that was the place designed and prepared by God.*

*Now the place is situated on the bank of a river which is called Elgu, from which to this day, as it is said, the town takes its name.*

*Then the saint, returning thanks, adored the Almighty Lord on bended knees; and rising from prayer he blessed that place and its surroundings in the name of the Lord. After that, in testimony and sign of salvation, and in earnest of the future religion erecting a cross, he there pitched his tents.*

*The boar, however, seeing what was done, came near, and by his frequent grunts seemed to ask somewhat of the bishop: then the saint, scratching the head of the brute, and stroking his mouth and teeth, said, "God Almighty, in Whose power are all the beasts of the forest, the oxen, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, grant thee for thy conduct such reward as He knoweth is best for thee."*

*Then the boar, as if well remunerated, bowing his head to the priest of the Lord, departed, and betook himself to his well-known groves.<sup>5</sup>*

There are several points of interest in this story.

It highlights something which contemporary Christians often forget; the Bible tells us that the whole of creation is one, that mankind and animal-kind are intrinsically linked.

This story also shows us that animal-kind relates in some way that we don't fully understand to the Creator. God sends the boar to lead the saint. God sends the great fish to save Jonah (and then sends the worm to destroy the vine that gives Jonah shade). Elijah was fed by ravens, Balaam taught by his donkey etc. etc. When you start to look for it the Bible is full of stories about how God uses animals to accomplish His will.

For ancient man, the link between humans and the animal kingdom was not merely biological or utilitarian, but also spiritual. If we look closely at the Bible, we note that God has an on-going interest in the animal kingdom. When God makes his covenant with Noah after the flood, it was a covenant not only with the humans but also with the animals;

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<sup>5</sup> From 'Lives of St Ninian and St Munghu', compiled & tr. by Alexander Penrose (1817-1875), written by Aelred, of Rievaulx, (1110-1167); and Jocelin, (1175-1214) the full text available from <https://archive.org/details/livesofsniniansk00forbrich>

*Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: 'I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you **and with every living creature that was with you – the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you – every living creature on earth.** I establish my covenant with you: never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.'*...

*I will remember my covenant between me and you and **all living creatures of every kind.** Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and **all living creatures of every kind on the earth.**'<sup>6</sup>*

Whilst God's covenant with Noah permitted the taking of animal life for human food purposes, it also contains an inherent warning that this shouldn't lead to indiscriminate slaughter.

God reminds mankind that this permission does not diminish the inherent value of these animals, neither does it confer 'object' status upon them. They are still beings, valued by God and enjoying a relationship with Him.

*...they do not exist solely to be exploited by human beings;  
their lives have an independent rationale.<sup>7</sup>*

This same point is reinforced by God's speech to Job during which God states His concern for, and involvement in, the lives of many different animals<sup>8</sup>. The common factor shared by many of these animals in this list is that they are wild animals. As such, man can neither dominate them nor derive any benefit from them, therefore,

*...they have their own raison d'être, wholly independent of human beings.<sup>9</sup>*

This being the case, the partnership between men, God, and the animals, made in the time of Noah was natural. Indeed, it may well be that God's choice of the ark as the means of saving the animal kingdom was deliberate. Perhaps he was trying to teach Noah and his sons about their intimate link with the animal world.

*Noah and his sons had to grasp their relationship with the rest of living beings  
by being the means of their preservation.<sup>10</sup>*

Perhaps our own contemporary struggles to save many species of animal from extinction could be viewed in the same light. Might this be God's way of helping us remember our connections (biological and spiritual) with the animal kingdom; of causing us to take more seriously our God-given responsibility to manage the earth (Genesis 2:15-20)?

The covenant with Noah - and the animals - placed serious obligations upon all parties. Man was charged with certain obligations about the taking of animal life. The animals were also charged with this same obligation with respect to the killing of other living beings. These are obligations to which God will call us all – animals and man - to give account.

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<sup>6</sup> See Genesis 9

<sup>7</sup> Shemesh Y. *ibid.*, p25

<sup>8</sup> Job 39-41

<sup>9</sup> Shemesh Y. *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Ellison, H.L. *ibid.*, p389

This view of animals, as beings living in relationship to God, didn't end at the time of Noah. In the Ten Commandments animals are also included in the observance of the Sabbath along with people.

*...but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, **nor your animals**, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.*<sup>11</sup>

Here we see that the Bible presents a vital spiritual connection between the animal kingdom and man.

Similarly, when the Bible tries to explain what heaven will be like, it does so in terms of restored harmony between animals and man, and between the animals themselves;

*The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.  
The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together,  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.  
The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,  
and the young child put his hand in the viper's nest.  
They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*<sup>12</sup>

Mankind was charged by God to take care of the creation; any authentic response to God will be expressed in a desire to take seriously our responsibility to care for the earth and for its animals.

For the Bible, the animal kingdom has real spiritual significance; the spiritual fate of mankind and animal-kind are always presented as being vitally inter-linked.

As an example of this we can consider the prophetic message of Habakkuk. In this prophecy God tells the Babylonians that they are finally going to understand the shameful activity of their conduct. This shameful activity is described in terms that includes the maltreatment of animals, the destruction of the land itself, of human beings and of their societies,

*The violence you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you,  
**And your destruction of animals will terrify you.**  
For you have shed man's blood; You have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.*<sup>13</sup>

Allied to these texts there are the many incidents throughout scripture which show that those who are closest to God seem also to have a deep relationship with animals. Think of Elijah who was fed by ravens, Elisha whose honour was defended by bears, Jonah who was transported by a fish, Daniel who was preserved from lions, Jesus and the fish which brought him a coin, to say nothing of Noah and the Ark!

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<sup>11</sup> Exodus 20:10, NIV

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 11:6-9 NIV see also 65:20-25

<sup>13</sup> Habakkuk 2:17, NIV

These stories remind us of the fact that animals often serve as God's agents, they accomplish God's will, indeed they often seem to do so with a far greater willingness than human beings - something that the story of Jonah brings out, where the great fish and the worm jump to obey God's command, whereas God's prophet fights and struggles! Do we see here a reflection of Saint Paul's observation that;

*For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.  
For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice,  
but by the will of the one who subjected it<sup>14</sup>*

It wasn't the creation that disobeyed God, but mankind. Does this mean that the animals relationship to God is somehow less damaged than our own?

There are examples in the Bible of God using animals to execute divine punishment. Several of the plagues of Egypt involved the animal kingdom; she-Bears were God's agents of punishment for the children who were disrespectful to his prophet Elisha<sup>15</sup>, hornets are used by God to drive out the enemies of Israel<sup>16</sup>.

One story that seems to indicate real spiritual capacity in animals is that of Balaam's donkey. In an amusing irony, the donkey was able to discern things in the invisible, spiritual realm that the world-renowned prophet could not!<sup>17</sup>.

Shemesh notes,

*Sometimes animals serve as a portent by acting contrary to their nature:  
the dogs that refrain from howling on the night before the Israelites' departure from Egypt (Exodus 11:7), the lion that does not mangle the body of the man of God or kill his donkey (1 Kings 13:28),  
and the lions that do not touch Daniel (Daniel 6:22f).<sup>18</sup>*

He also reminds us of the Philistines' attempt to discern the will of God concerning the captured Ark of the Covenant. They placed it on a cart drawn by cows,

*...who, contrary to their nature, took the road to Beth Shemesh,  
lowing as they went but turning neither to the left or right,  
even though they had been separated from their calves (1 Sam. 6:12)<sup>19</sup>*

All of these examples show that in the Bible, the animal kingdom is often involved in the work of God.

So, if all this is true, how should we live with the animals?

Well the story of Saint Munghu and the boar gives us some clear guidance.

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<sup>14</sup> Romans 8:19-20 NIV

<sup>15</sup> 2 Kings 2:24

<sup>16</sup> See Exodus 23 :28; Deuteronomy 7 :20

<sup>17</sup> Numbers 22:22ff

<sup>18</sup> Shemesh Y. And Many Beasts (Jonah 4 :11) : The Function and Status of Animals in the Book of Jonah, The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures, Vol. 10, Art. 6, 2010, p5

<sup>19</sup> ibid.

*scratching the head of the brute*

The first thing we see is the expression of Munghu's gentleness and his attitude of love and appreciation expressed towards animals. Animals, like humans, seem to enjoy physical contact. The first thing Munghu does is to express his love for the boar by giving him a good scratch.

*and stroking his mouth and teeth*

The second thing we note is a reference to the dangerous aspects of the animal. Wild animals are, by their very nature, dangerous. Living in rural France I have seen several hunting dogs with 30cm scars caused by a wild boar striking out at them with its tusks.

A Christian attitude towards animals will certainly maintain a healthy respect for their wildness and their inherent danger, but it will not allow this healthy fear to be a barrier to our appreciation of them and our willingness to live with them.

*God Almighty, in Whose power are all the beasts of the forest,  
the oxen, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea,  
grant thee for thy conduct such reward as He knoweth is best for thee.*

The blessing which Munghu prays over the boar expresses the reality of the great difference between man and beast. Such is this difference that we often don't know what is best for wild animals.

Our existence is on a different level from theirs and has a very different context. We need to acknowledge this humbly before God. We need to maintain the motivation of doing what is best for them, to bless them, and seek God for His guidance about how we can best achieve this.

**Some questions for personal meditation:**

- Is the biblical view of the animals' relationship with God something you have considered before?
- How do you think we should treat animals in the light of their spiritual relationship with God?
- Have animals ever taught you anything, revealed any spiritual truth to you?
- What do you believe about the relationship between God and animals? What does that imply for man's relationship with them?
- Are there any areas of your life where you are aware of God's prompting to change your way of relating to animals?
- Do you know any animals that are a blessing and a boon to their owners? Are there any animals you should pray God's blessing upon?

## Soul friendship or advancing together in God



*When some time had passed, certain sons of Belial, a generation of vipers, of the kin of the aforementioned King Morken, excited by the sting of intense hatred, and infected with the poison of the devil, took counsel together how they might lay hold of Munghu by craft, and put him to death; but fearing the people, they did not dare to do that evil deed openly, because all held him for a teacher, bishop, and shepherd of their souls, and loved him as an angel of light and peace.*

*In many ways they laid great wait for him, that they might suddenly shoot him with arrows ; but the Lord became unto him a tower of strength, that his enemies, the sons of wickedness, should not triumph over him...*

*And when the man of God had learnt this, although he could meet force by force, he thought it better for the time to quit the place and to give place unto wrath, and to seek elsewhere a richer harvest of souls, rather than to bear about with him a conscience seared as with a hot iron, or even darkened by the death of any man, however wicked...*

*At last, instructed by Divine revelation, he journeyed from those regions towards Menevia, where at that time the holy Bishop David, like the morning star when it with its rosy countenance heraldeth the day, was shining forth in his episcopal work...*

*At length, safe and sound, he reached Saint David, and found in him greater works than had been reported by fame.*

*But the holy Bishop David rejoiced with great joy at the arrival of such and so great a stranger. With eyes overflowing with tears, and mutually embracing, he received Munghu as an angel of the Lord, dear to God, and retaining him for a certain time in his immediate vicinity, always honoured him to a wonderful extent.*

*Therefore these two sons of light dwelt together, attending upon the Lord of the whole earth, like two lamps burning before the Lord, whose tongues became the keys of heaven, that by them a multitude of men might be deemed meet to enter therein.*

*Those two saints were united together opposite each other, like the two cherubim in the holy of holies in the temple of the Lord, having their faces bent down towards the mercy-seat. They lifted their wings on high in the frequent meditation upon heavenly things; they folded them down in the ordination and arrangement of earthly things.*

*They touched each other mutually with their wings, as by the instruction of each other in the Doctrine of Salvation, and in the alternate energizing of virtues they excited each other a more earnest advance in sanctity.*

*Thus these saints, either mentally rising up unto God, or being made useful to us, have left to posterity an example of laying hold of and labouring so as to attain to eternal life.*

*(After about 15 years of exile and of joint ministry with Saint David, Saint Munghu was finally able to return to his see of Glasgow.)*

*Then, giving his blessing to the king, he departed : and bidding farewell to Saint David, after mutual benediction, he betook himself to the place aforesaid, with a great multitude of disciples who had flocked to him, preferring to lead with him a lowly life in a foreign land to living without him luxuriously in their own.*

*Thus the most holy Munghu, separated from Saint David as to bodily presence, but by no means withdrawn from his love and from the vision and observation of the inner man, gave no sound sleep to his eyes, nor quiet rest to his eyelids, until he found a place fit for building a tabernacle to the Lord, the God.<sup>20</sup>*

*But the holy Bishop David rejoiced with great joy at the arrival of such and so great a stranger.  
With eyes overflowing with tears, and mutually embracing,  
he received Munghu as an angel of the Lord, dear to God,  
and retaining him for a certain time in his immediate vicinity,  
always honoured him to a wonderful extent.*

The first principle of soul-friendship is the mutual acknowledgement of the inherent value of the other and the desire to honour each other in the Lord.

Each Christian is a much-beloved son or daughter of God and, as such, we must seek to appreciate each other and to value each other in the same way that God Himself values us. This is practically expressed in acts that honour the person.

*Therefore these two sons of light dwelt together,  
attending upon the Lord of the whole earth,  
like two lamps burning before the Lord,  
whose tongues became the keys of heaven,  
that by them a multitude of men might be deemed meet to enter therein.<sup>21</sup>*

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<sup>20</sup> From 'Lives of St Ninian and St Munghu', compiled & tr. by Alexander Penrose (1817-1875), written by Aelred, of Rievaulx, (1110-1167); and Jocelin, (1175-1214) full text available from <https://archive.org/details/livesofsniniansk00forbrich>

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

The second principle of soul-friendship is the mutual standing in worship before God. It is always God who is central in a soul-friendship.

Out of this mutual standing in worship before God we find that there naturally emerges a holy conversation - a sharing of what we have received from God.

We also see that this holy conversation is missional, it reaches out beyond the two friends and touches others with divine revelation that sparks faith and brings salvation.

*...like the two cherubim in the holy of holies in the temple seat of the Lord,  
having their faces bent down towards the mercy-seat.*

*They lifted their wings on high in the frequent mediation upon heavenly things; they folded them down in the ordination and arrangement of earthly things.<sup>22</sup>*

The third principle of soul-friendship is that it is not merely mystical, it is also earthed and rooted in the realities of daily life. The two saints not only shared in worship and divine contemplation, they also helped one another in the complex organisation and practical arrangement of their ministries.

*They touched each other mutually with their wings,  
as by the instruction of each other in the Doctrine of Salvation;  
and in the alternate energizing of virtues  
they excited in each other to a more earnest advance in sanctity.<sup>23</sup>*

The fourth principle of soul-friendship is that it facilitates mutual instruction in the faith and mutual exhortation in sanctity.

Each of us has our own grasp of elements of the faith, grown out of the particular crucible of our experiences; therefore we always have things to share with each other, things to teach each other.

We are all also 'works in progress' when it comes to sanctity. We have our particular strengths and weaknesses. We can inspire and challenge each other to do better, to advance. Any genuine friendship desires the very best for the friend.

In Christian terms this is expressed in loving encouragement and also exhortation.

*As iron sharpens iron,  
so one person sharpens another.<sup>24</sup>*

*...and bidding farewell to Saint David, after mutual benediction.<sup>25</sup>*

The fifth principle of soul-friendship that we can draw from this meeting of Munghu and David is expressed in their parting, and it is the principle of mutual benediction.

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Proverbs 27:17 NIV

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

This is the primary goal, our desire is that our friend might be blessed. Blessed in their walk with God, blessed in a deeper understanding of God's will, blessed with a life that expresses closer harmony with holiness, blessed with a ministry that more clearly presents the love and call of God to men.

*Thus the most holy Munghu, separated from Saint David as to bodily presence, but by no means withdrawn from his love and from the vision and observation of the inner man.*<sup>26</sup>

The final principle of soul friendship is that it is a committed, continuing relationship. Although the two men parted, they did not cease to remember the other, to pray for the other and to be present to each other in their thoughts.

Their relationship expresses the reality of the Universal Church, that is to say, all those who are in relation with God are, by that same relationship, also in relation with each other.

If we have God as our Father, we have each other as our brother or sister. This relationship as it depends upon God, is not limited by time or space.

Soul friendship seeks to hold on to the reality of this mystical bond between believers. It will not allow little things like geography or death to interrupt their communion.

It is appropriate that we learn these principles of soul-friendship from the saint also known as 'Munghu', for his very name signifies 'dear friend'.

Who better to instruct us in how better to love one another in God?

### **Questions for personal meditation**

- What aspects of soul friendship most speak to you?
- What elements of soul friendship have you experienced in your life?
- Is there someone with whom God might be calling you to enter into a soul friendship?
- Give thanks to God for the souls that have befriended your own soul. Know that neither death, nor geography can separate them from you; hold them in your prayers this day.
- If you do not have a person who is a soul friend to you, ask God to give you such a person, for mutual support and strength on our life of pilgrimage.
- Acknowledge and embrace the fact that we can only travel towards God together, in community and fraternity.

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

## Individual Conversations Sign-Up Sheet

Time Slot	Name
10:20 - 10:40	
10:40-11:00	
11:00-11:20	
11:20-11:40	
11:40-12:00	
1:20-1:40	
1:40-2:00	
2:00-2:20	
2:20-2:40	