

## Spiritual Practice of the Month: Prayer Walking (Week 3)

Every pilgrimage Frank and I lead to the British Isles includes at least one prayer walk. When we go to Ireland, we spend several days in the beautiful Glendalough Valley in County Wicklow. There, as part of our prayer walk, we engage in a venerable Celtic practice that the Irish call *deiseal*.

*Deisal* is an ancient form of pilgrimage in which one walks around a holy site in a sunwise direction a prescribed number of times, usually one, three or seven times. To walk with the sun is to acknowledge we are part of the vast cosmic creation. With each circuit, a prayer may be said or sung. Similar to walking the labyrinth (a subject for the future), the Celtic practice of *deiseal* helps to slow us down and to free us from the logical, linear way of thinking that we are accustomed to using. It moves us from our heads to our hearts.

It doesn't require a trip across the ocean to find a holy site where this form of prayer walking can be practiced. For instance, try walking around a favorite tree. Cemeteries have always been "thin places" for me, so I sometimes walk at the Langley Pioneer Cemetery near my house. (The Celts call any place where the veil between heaven and earth seems especially porous a "thin place.") At a time when we're unable to enter our physical church, making a prayer walk at the Columbarium or even the parking lot can be a way of communing with the Divine as well as blessing our St. A's community, including those who have journeyed ahead to the Greater Life.

*Teresa Di Biase*