

KNEELING AT EASTER*

There are no synonyms for the verb *to kneel*.
It stands unique, nothing else says it.
It can be an act of cruel coercion, gun to head,
but at its best is a gesture of wonder and waiting
and rightful creaturehood.
If you kneel at some Crosses you face the weary, holed feet
of the God we killed,
your kiss tentative recompense in the wake of the Judas peck.
If you kneel before the great Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise,
an eloquence of stone,
your eyes meet not death but the first frissons of awakening
from what had seemed irretrievably finished,
as there your eyes find
the corpse beneath the substantial slab
on which the helmeted guards hold their spears,
all that heaviness pressing, pressing on the God we killed,
until the tiniest wren of stone slips subtly past and
instils its breath into the mouth of the cadaverous one,
who is about to rise, with the wren, like the sun,
for a new, transformed, but unmistakable day.
That's one version of resurrection that meets the eye directly
as you kneel amidst the ruined green by the great flowing river.
Bless and direct your eyes today
to what colours and what waters are yours,
and see what rising life meets them.

*The great Cross of the Scriptures of Clonmacnoise dates from the 10th century. It is part of the now ruined monastic settlement founded by St Ciaran in the 6th century by the River Shannon, Ireland. The Cross stands at four metres and is carved on all sides with sculptured panels, many recounting biblical stories. The resurrection scene is found on the west face, designed to meet the eye of the kneeling pilgrim as the first scene viewed.

-Mary Wickham rsm