

## ***He no more troubled the pool of silence***

As each Lent begins; we are reminded of the time Jesus spent in the wilderness when out of silence comes temptation. Tonight concludes, with another kind of silence. A silence in which Jesus wrestles not with the devil's allurements, but with remaining true to the love which demands everything. The wilderness struggle was about doing those things that would bring him food, fame and fortune. The agony in the garden augers betrayal, condemnation and death. They were very different silences and Jesus' response was also very different.

These two silences bookended Jesus' public ministry. A ministry of words and deeds, words and deeds that evoked

different responses. For the most part they were well received by the wider population, impressed by the healings and works of wonder. The religious leaders, on the other hand regarded these same actions as an affront to their authority; which led to its denouement in the events we recall this week.

And the closer he came to his fate, the more rapidly he was abandoned by many of his erstwhile followers; the fickle ones who are happy to tag along in the good times but shrink from the real cost of loyalty.

It is not difficult to recognise something of our own prevarications here. Holding firm to faith is never easy and we too are put to the test by events, challenges and questions in the face of which we can feel

truly helpless, even abandoned. So, it is not ours to criticise the failings of others but to acknowledge our own. To face down our own demons in company with the one who took it upon himself to wash the feet of those who would fall short of his hopes.

And there is something else we can draw from tonight, a willingness to have our own encounters with silence, in which we too can confront temptation, wrestle with the future and commit to God's love.

There is a poem by George Mackay Brown called The Poet, in which he describes how the poet's inspiration lies in silence. The poetry that emerges is offered to the wider world through performance but when the time of euphoria and acclaim

ebbs the poet is once again summoned by  
silence.

Therefore he no more troubled the  
pool of silence.

But put on a mask and cloak,  
Strung a guitar  
And moved among the folk.

Dancing they cried,  
'Ah, how our sober islands  
Are gay again, since this blind lyrical  
tramp  
Invaded the fair!'

Under the last dead lamp  
When all the dancers and masks had  
gone inside  
His cold stare  
Returned to its true task, interrogation  
of silence.