

## Reflection from Fr. Colm on the Friday of the 6<sup>th</sup> week of Eastertide

*Audio posted to the Parish Website on Friday 22nd May 2020*

Hi everybody hope you're okay. Windy but beautiful day today. I go out and say Mass each morning here alone, well not alone, because there's another individual present and that individual of course has four legs. it's my dog Ellie. Parsons Terrier.

I got her under the most extraordinary circumstances nearly six years ago going down to St Godric's Church on a Saturday afternoon, we have Exposition from 2-3 each day and the dog was tied to the gate by chain and left her for an hour, left a note and indeed supported by two parishioners who were down at the church at the time it was felt that we might try and find a home for her. I certainly didn't want to provide here as a home. I'd been down that road with a dog and those of you who've lost an animal know the sadness that that can bring, and it is a responsibility. However, having lost her on at least two or three occasions, overnight one time, she was found by students who kindly looked after her for a while. I thought they might take her, but no. RSPCA weren't exactly the greatest help. And so, I was left with her and she's been with me ever since.

And she goes into the church for Mass every morning and will not come out of the church until after Exposition later on today which is after 3 o'clock when she knows perhaps, she'll be either fed or walked. The intelligence, the support, the comfort of animals is all too obvious now in this time of lockdown. Psychologists, psychiatrists, wise people in all forms of life are telling us how important animals are to us at this time and I can well understand someone like animal theologian like Karl Barth who said that *"Animals belong only to God."* *"Animals belong only to God."* I found this very, very powerful because they are us to basically look after and care for and this has been my responsibility over these past few years.

Sadly now, the arthritis is kicking in and she's finding it harder and harder to walk but the love and support indeed that she has elicited from beyond this presbytery to the parishioners in particular, those who've helped over the years to walk her, Patrick in particular who looks after her while I'm away, all attest to the great affection that she brings to whatever situation, care homes in particular that Patrick brings her into.

Yes indeed, St Godric was the appropriate saint, the appropriate church for a dog to be given to me because Godric was the great saint and lover of animals down in Finchale. Good morning.