



[Going to the Communion - 'A' Gluasad tro Chreideamh' (in Gaelic and English)]

[Gaelic]

Tha cleachdadh a cheilidh, mar a bha e riamh, glé làidir anns a Phàirc gus an latha'n diugh, agus bha sinn o chionn ghoirid a ceilidh air bean uasal ann an Leumrabhagh a tha nis còir air ceithir fichead bliadhna dh' aois, agus's e ì fhein a tha tlachdmhor gasda a bhith 'n a cuideachd, oir tha i tuigseach agus tha cuimhne mhath aice. Tha i air a bhith leantuinn an t-soisgeil bho h-òige, agus os cionn na h-uile ni 's e a tlachd a bhi bruidhinn air cùisean spioradail, anns am bheil i foghlumachte. Tha i cuideachd air a bhi gabhail ùidh dhe na nithean a tha tachairt mu'n cuairt oirre agus tha i mar sin fiosrach da rìreabh air sinnsearachd agus cleachdaidhean mhuinntir na Pàirc.

Dh'innis i dhomh an sgeulachd a tha a toirt ur 'n aire chum an dòigh beatha agus na nithean a bha, agus a tha, fhathast luachmhor do mhoran de mhuinntir an àite, 's e sin a soisgeul.

Bha, *ars ise*, cùisean glé dhuilich an uair a bha sinn òg agus a bha sinn a togail an teaghlach ach bha e iogantach mar a bha an Tighearna a cuideachadh leinn.

Bha e cleachdail dhuinn a bhith a dol chum nan òrduighean do na coimhcheangalan air feadh an eilean cho tric agus a b'urrainn dhuinn, agus b'abhaist dhomhs' a bhith dol gu òrduighean an Rubha aig a h-uile àm a bha e furasd, agus gu h-àraidh aig àm an fhoghair.

Air a bhliadhna bha seo, bho chionn fhada, aig tìde an fhoghair, bha m'inntinn anns an Rubha oir bha mi miannachadh a bhith ann a cuideachd slugh a Chruithfhear air beinn nan òrdugh, ach cha robh dòigh air bith air am biodh e comasach dhomhsa 'dol ann a sin oir bha an fhoghair fluich agus bha'm bàrr a muigh agus moran de obair croitearachd an fhoghair fhathast ri dheanamh. A chùlaibh air a sin bha'n iasgach bochd air a bhliadh' ud agus thàinig mo chompanach Fionnlagh dhachaidh bho'n iasgach gu'n chosnadh 'sa bith.

Bha e 'na chosnaiche math, a leantuinn an iasgach, a leantuinn an iasgach a shamhradh 's a gheamhradh, agus cho luath 's a thàinig e bho iasgach an sgadain an t-samhraidh, thoisich e leis an eathar bheag air iasgach nan giomach.

Ged nach robh anns an taigh ach aon paipear not de airgiod, cho-eignich Fionnlagh mi gu bhith dol a chum nan òrduighean mar a b' abhaist dhomh, agus ars esan, 'Thoir leat am paipear not airson farraibh a bhus, oir dh'fhaodadh e bhith gu faigh sinn airgiod nan giomach a chuir mise gu Billingsgate ann an Lunainn.'

Cha robh e idir cinnteach gu faigheadh duine airgiod air giomach a chuireadh e gu Billingsgate oir bha'n astar fad as air an treàna agus bha feadhainn de na giomaich ri bàsachadh air an t-slighe. Bha amannan ann a bha ceannaichaidhean Bhillingsgate a gearrainn gu robh chuid mhor, neo na giomaich gu leir, air bàsachadh air an t-slighe, agus mar sin cha phaigheadh iad airgiod air giomaich mharbh. Cha robh mi faicinn iomchaidh gu'm bu chòir dhomh falbh o'n taigh anns an t-suidheachadh anns an robh cùisean na dachaidh, ach cha'n fhaodainn fuireach le Fionnlagh, agus mu dheireadh b'fheudar dhomh mi fhìn ullachadh agus am paipear not a thoirt leam maille ris na sgillingean a chruinnich sinn air feadh an taigh airson a 'collecion'. Chuimhnich mi ann an sin air mo mhathair ann an Cromor', agus bha mi uile chinnteach gu fhaighinn mo chruaidheartan 'nuair a chluinneadh i cho beag smaoinich 's a bha mi. Co-dhiùbh cha robh math tilleadh a nis.

Fhuair mi'm bus ann an Leumrabhagh, agus ann an Grabhair thàinig bean Aonghais Chalum agus bean Mhurchaidh Fhionnlaigh air a bhus, agus iad fhein air an t-slighe gu òrduighean an Rubha. Bha sinn a sheanchas ann an sin gus an do ràinig am bus Steornabhagh, agus ann an sin chuir boireannaich Ghrabhair boinn-an-tac, nach e mhàin gu'm paigheadh iad am bus dhomh, (oir bha iadsan air a 'phension') ach gu feumainn a thighinn còmhla riutha gu taigh an càirdean, tigh Mhurchaidh Berry, gus a fhaighinn cupan te. 'Nuair a bha sinn a gabhail an te ann an taigh Mhurchaidh Berry bha balach òg a ruith air an làr, agus dh'fhoighnich mi dha, 'Dè a tha thu fhein dol a dheanamh 'nuair a dh'fhàsas tu mor?' agus thubhairt e rium air ball gu robh e gu bhith 'n a Mhinistear. Ann am Freasdal an Cruithfhear, sin mar a thachair do Chalum,

agus tha e aig an àm seo 'n a Mhinistear searmonachadh an t-soisgeul ann an Siabost ann an Leodhus.

Bha mo chàirdean à Grabhair airson dàil a dheanamh ann an Steornabhagh, ach bha mise airson breth air a cheud seirbhis agus dh'fhalbh mi airson bus an Rubha fhaighinn. Air an rathad chun a bhus co thàinig 'na mo luib ach Ishbel Ruadh, Bantrach Mhurchadh Choinneach à Calabost, agus thuir i, 'Is math gu'n choinnich mi ribh, a Bhabara, a ghràidh. Fuiridh sibh còmhla rium fhìn ann an taigh anns am bheil mi eolach, faisg air an eaglais'. 'Nuair a ràinig sinn eaglais an Rubha, phàigh Ishbel Ruadh am bus dhi fhein agus dhomhsa, agus cha'n fhaodainn cuir an aghaidh a chaoimhneas iongantach sin a bh'air a nochdadh dhomh.

'S ann a bha mise cleachdail air a bhith fuireach còmhla ri bana-charaid te a mhuinntir na h-Aird, a h-uile àm a bhithinn aig òrduighean an Rubha, agus aig an eaglais choinnich mi ri mo bhana-charaid as an Aird agus spàrr i orm a thighinn maille rithe fhein mar a b'abhaist, ach thubhairt mi rithe gu feumadh i mo lethsgheul a ghabhail aig an àm seo, oir nach b'urrainn dhomh tadhal oirre 'chionn gu feumainn fantuinn maille ri seann bhean math à Calabost ann an taigh faisg air an eaglais a chionn 'nach robh chompanach eile aice.

Chòrd na h-òrduighean rium, oir fhuair mi beannachadh a Chruithfhear, agus an uair a chaidh mi leigeil beannachd le mo dheigh bhana-charaid as an Aird mus do dh'fhalbh mi dhachaidh Di-luain, chuir i ceis dhùinte 'na mo laimh agus thubhairt i rium, 'Cuir sud 'na do Bhiobull agus 'na fosgail e gu ruig thu dhachaidh agus bith na naidheachdan gu leir agad an sin.'

A tighinn as an Rubha nuas gu Steornabhagh Di-luain, thachair dhomh bhith an cuideachd tlachdmhor, agus aig ceann an t-slighe ann an Steornabhagh cha'n fhaodainn mo làmh a chuir 'na mo phòcaid airson am bus a phàigheadh oir dh'fheumainn leigeil leis an fheadhainn bha maille rium anns a chuideachd am bus a phàigheadh dhomh, agus a chùlaibh air an sin dh'fheumainn a 'dhol a steach gu cupan tè maille riutha.

An deidh an tè, chaidh mi cuairt air an t-sràid agus co thachair rium ach te dhe mo chàirdean a Cromore, Barbara nan Càrn, a bha mi glé thoilichte air a coinneachadh. 'Nuair a leig mi beannachd le Barbara airson cabhaig a dheanamh airson glacadh a bhus gu Leumrabhagh, chuir i paipear deich tasdan 'na mo laimh airson farraibh a bhus gu Leumrabhagh. Mus do thuig mise de bha tachairt bha Barbara air m'fhàgail agus cha b'urrainn mi ach taing a thoirt dhith airson a caoimhneas.

Bha dithis fhiorannach a Leumrabhagh air a bhus maille rium agus iad fhein tighinn bho na h-òrduighean, agus an uair a bha iad a tighinn mach as a bhus romhamsa ann an Leumrabhagh phàigh iad farraibh a bhus dhaibh fhein agus dhomhsa, agus mar sin bha mi air ais ann an Leumrabhagh Di-luain gun bhriseadh air a phaipear not a thug mi leum bho'n taigh. Chunnac mi ann an sin làmh a Chruithfhear dha m' stùireadh agus dh'fhairich mi mi fhein cho ismealach iorasal bochd bho chomhair an uile Chumhachdach.

Aig an taigh shuidh mi sios a dh'innseadh do Fhionnlaigh mu'n a chaidh dhomh agus dh'fhosgail mi an litir a thug mo bhana-charaid de mhuinntir an Aird dhomh, ach ann an àite litir le naidheachdan an Rubha 's e bha ann an sin paipear not eile.

A chùlaibh air a sin, thuir Fionnlagh gu robh airgid nan giomach air a thighinn a Lunainn agus nach robh gearainn ann gu robh aon de na giomaich marbh, agus ars esan, 'Bha e feumail gu'n ghabh thu comhairle agus nach do threig thu'n cleachdadh a bh'agad bho chionn fhada, a bhith dol gu òrduighean an fhoghair anns an Rubha'.

Ann an sin thàinig bho chomhair m'intinn an fhirinn a tha ag radh: 'An sin thàinig an ceud fhear, ag radh, A Thighearna, bhuannaich do phunnd deich puind.' Lucas 19, v16.

'S ann rud-eigin mar sin a dh'innis Barbara an sgeulachd dhomhsa timchioll air cupan tè, fa chomhair teine mor monach agus tha an eachdraidh cuir an ceill dhuinn gur e beatha creidimh anns am bheil Barbara beò, agus 's ann mar sin a bha, agus a tha, moran eile ann an Leodhus, agus bha e dhaibh a reir an creidimh mar a tha e gealltainn anns an fhirinn.

Is mor an fhoghlum a tha ri bhith air fhaotainn ann a bhith ri eisdeachd fein-fhiosrachadh agus eolas seann dhaoine ghlic a tha air a thighinn troimh mhoran dhearbhaidhean anns an t-saoghal.

Ged a tha Barbara ann am Freasdal a Chruithfhear, air a fàgail 'na bantraich a nis, tha i taingeil airson an tomhais slàinte a th'aice agus airson maitheasan a Chruithfhear dhith, agus 's ann aithnibh a tha àite anns an eaglais falamh.

Tha i cuideachd taingeil airson na goireasan a th'aice ann an Leumrabhagh 'na seann aois agus thug i gaire orm 'nuair a bha i a cuimhneachadh dhuinn an àm a bha iad 'nan clann-nighean air mhuinntearas, i fhein agus bean Dhomhnuill Aonghais Mhor agus feadhainn eile, aig fìor bhean-uasal ann an Inbhirnis. Ars ise:

'Nuair a gheibheadh sinn a chailleach a mach bhitheadh sinn, le annas, a feuchainn oirn còta fur na caillich, agus bha anns an taigh mhor sin gach gne goireas a bha feumail; an dealan, agus an bùrn air an tap, agus a refrigerator, agus moran eile ris nach robh sinn cleachdt' agus nach robh dùil againn fhaicinn air tuath Leodhus. Chan eil nì de na nithean sin nach eil agamsa 'n diugh ann an Leumrabhagh agus, *ars ise le gaire chridheil*, Cha deanainn iomlaid ri bean uasal a chunnaic mi riamh, còta fur neo eile.

Facal mu dheireadh

Tha an saoghal air fad ag atharrachadh gu luath, agus anns an fhichead bliadhna bho chaidh an sgeulachd ghoirid seo a sgrìobhadh tha ur dòigh beatha ann an Leodhus mar an ceudna air atharrachadh gu mor. A measg rudan eile, tha cleachdadh tigh-ceilidh a bhaile agus cruinneachadh de shluagh a Chruithfhear anns na taighean far am bitheadh iad a connaltradh anns an Sgrìobtuir, air a dhol air ais gu mor.

Tha cuideachd an cleachdadh maith a bha anns a choimhearsnachd seo, ann a bhith suidheal gu cuirm nan òrduighean do gach cearnaidh dhe'n eilean fad an deireadh-seachduinn bho Di-ardaoin gu Di-luain air a dhol ais gu mor.

Bha daoine coimhead air an eilean air fad mar aon choimhearsnachd mor agus bha ullachadh air a dheanamh leis an t-sluagh air fad airson coigrich nan òrduighean a ghabhail a steach gu aoidheachd a nochdadh dhaibh nan dachaidhean. Bhitheadh muinntir an taigh a toirt na leapannan do na h-aoidheanan agus iad fhein a cadal air an ùrlar ann a seidean. Tha cuid againn aig am bheil cuimhne air coir agus fichead neach a bhith air aoidheachd anns na taighean againn aig tide nan òrduighean.

Tha na carbadan cho goireasach anns an latha'n diugh, agus tha chuid mhor de luchd-tadhal nan òrduighean a tilleadh dhachaidh gu'n taighean fhein air an oidhche. Tha cuideachd anns an latha tha seo na firinnich agus na boirinnich air an obair-latha fad an t-seachduinn, agus chan eil iad soar airson falbh bho'n dachaidh gu Di-sathurn agus feumaidh iad tilleadh dhachaidh oidhche na Sàbaid airson bhith aig an obair-latha air maduinn Di-luain.

'S docha, ann a fichead bliadhna eile nach bith cuimhn' aig duine air cleachdadh na h-òrduighean a bha'n a Leodhus, agus mar sin 's e sgeulachd a bhitheas air leth iongantach a tha seo.

[English] Walking by Faith

The custom of visiting is still very strong in Park nowadays, just as it always was, and recently I visited an upstanding lady in Lemreway, who is now over eighty years old. It is a pleasure to be in her company, as she is very intelligent, and has a good memory. She has been a professing Christian since she was young, and she loves talking of spiritual things, of which she is very knowledgeable, more than anything else. She also takes a great interest in all that goes on around her; therefore she is well acquainted with the customs and genealogies of Park.

She related this story, which shows us the way of life that was, and still is, precious to many local people, which is a spiritual way of life. She begins:

Everyday living was hard when we were young and trying to bring up a family, but it was wonderful how the Lord helped us.

It was customary for us to go to Communion in other congregations throughout the Island as often as we could, and I always used to go to Point when I could, especially in the autumn.

There was this time long ago in the autumn, my thoughts were in Point, as I longed to be in the company of the Lord's people at the Lord's table, but there was no way I could go as we had had a wet autumn which meant there was still a lot of work to catch up on on the croft. On top of that it had been a poor year for the fishing, and Finlay, my husband, came home from the fishing without having made any money.

He was a good worker, fishing in summer and winter and as soon as the herring finished in summer; he would take out the small boat and go after lobsters.

Although there was only one pound note in the house, Finlay persuaded me to go to the Communion as normal. He also made me take the pound note for my bus fare, because it was quite likely that the cheque for the lobsters he sent to Billingsgate in London would arrive soon.

It was not always guaranteed that you would get money for the lobsters you sent to Billingsgate, as some of the lobsters would not survive the long train journey. Sometimes the

buyers in Billingsgate complained that most if not all of the lobsters had died on route, therefore they were not going to pay for dead lobsters. I did not think it was appropriate for me to leave the home in that situation, but Finlay would not have me stay. In the end I got ready, and took the pound note along with some pennies we found around the house for the church collection. I remembered my mother in Cromore, and was certain that she would rage at me for being so thoughtless. Anyway, I felt there was no going back now.

I caught the bus in Lemreway. When we got to Gravir, Angus Calum's wife and Murdo Finlay's wife came on board. They were also going to Point Communion. We chatted away until the bus arrived in Stornoway. Then the Gravir ladies dug their heels in and insisted on not only paying my bus fare (they were on the pension), but that I accompany them to their relative, Murdo Berry's house for a cup of tea. While we were taking tea in Murdo's house there was a little boy running around the floor. When I asked the boy what he wanted to be when he grew up, he told me that he wanted to be a minister. In God's providence, Calum became a minister, and is at present preaching in Shawbost, Lewis.

My Gravir friends wanted to stay a while in Stornoway, but as I wanted to catch the morning service in Point, I went for the bus. On the way to the bus I met ginger-haired Ishbel (Murdo Kenneth's widow from Calbost). She was pleased to meet me, as she wanted me to stay with her in a house she knew well near the Church. When we arrived at the Church in Point, she paid my bus fare as well, and would have been insulted if I had not allowed her to extend this amazing kindness to me.

I had been in the habit of staying with a lady in Aird each time I went to the Point Communion. When I met my friend from Aird at the Church, she invited me to stay with her as usual. I had to beg her forgiveness this time, as I could not visit her due to me accompanying the old lady from Calbost to a house near the Church.

Well, I enjoyed the Communion because the Lord blessed me. When it came time to say goodbye to my friend from Aird on Monday, she put a closed envelope in my hand, told me to put it in my Bible, and not to open it until I got home. I would then get all the news in it.

On the way to Stornoway from Point on that Monday, I happened to be in good Christian company. When it came to paying the bus fare in Stornoway my companions insisted on paying the fare, and on top of that they persuaded me to join them for a cup of tea.

After my cup of tea I took a walk around town, and whom did I meet but my relative Barbara from Cromore. It was good to see her. When I had to bid her goodbye in a hurry so that I could catch the bus for Lemreway, she put a ten-shilling note in my hand for the bus fare. Before I realised what she had done, she had gone and I didn't get a chance to thank her for her kindness.

There were two men from Lemreway on the bus with me, and they too were going home from the Communion. When they got off the bus before me, they paid my fare along with their own. With all that I was back in Lemreway on Monday without having broken the pound note I left home with. In all that I could see the hand of God guiding me, and felt so poor and inadequate in the presence of the Almighty.

When I got home I told Finlay how well everything went for me, and when I opened the envelope that my friend from Aird gave me I found a pound note, not the news from Point.

As well as that, Finlay said that the lobster money had come from London without one complaint of a dead lobster. He told me that it was just as well that I took his advice in not forsaking the custom I had for many years in going to the Point Communion.

At that I remembered the verse in Scripture that says: 'Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.' Luke chapter 19, verse 16.

That is how Barbara related her story to me over a cup of tea, beside a big peat fire. Her experience shows us that it is by Faith Barbara lives. That is also how many others in Lewis have lived, and continue to live. They were blessed according to their Faith.

We can learn a lot by listening to the experiences and knowledge gained by wise elderly people who have suffered much hardship and trials in this world.

Although Barbara has been left a widow in God's providence, she is thankful for a measure of health and God's goodness to her. And it is very rarely you see her seat empty in church.

She is also grateful for the amenities she now enjoys in Lemreway in her old age. She made me laugh when she told me of the time they were young girls working away. One of her co-workers was Donald's (Big Angus's son) wife, and they were working as maids for a posh lady in Inverness. When the lady of the house went out, they would try on her fur coat. In that big house they had electricity, water on tap, a fridge, and many other useful things that she thought she would never see in a village in Lewis. She now has all these things, and laughs heartily as she tells me that she would not swap places with any posh woman in Inverness, fur coat or no.

A final word

The whole world is changing fast, and in the twenty years since this story was written, our way of life in Lewis has also changed dramatically. Amongst other things the customs of story telling in the village and Christians meeting for fellowship where they would discuss Scripture are fading.

Also the good custom people once had of spending Thursday till Monday at a Communion weekend throughout the Island is disappearing.

People used to look on the Island as one large community, and every one made ample preparation to extend hospitality to all the visitors at the Communions. The people of the home would give up their beds for their guests while they slept on mattresses on the floor. We remember having over twenty guests to stay at the Communions.

The cars are handy now-a-days, so most visitors to Communions return home at night. Also both men and women are employed from Monday to Friday; therefore not keen to be away from home on Saturday. They also need to be home on Sunday night to be ready for work on Monday morning again.

Maybe in another twenty years the custom in Lewis of going to the Communions will have been forgotten, and that is what will make this story even more amazing.

[ends]

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