

The Miracles: Following in the Footsteps of St Winefride – bringing healing to the hurt



The Baths at St. Winifred's Well, near Woolston, Shropshire cc-by-sa/2.0 - © Des Blenkinsopp - geograph.org.uk/p/2945521

Healing traditions are associated with a variety of places associated with St Winefride, such as the holy well at Holywell, the baths at Woolston, near Oswestry, and at Shrewsbury Abbey, although exactly how and why such associations came about are sometimes lost in the mists of time. But what is interesting is how many people seek out places of healing, and seek out springs and wells, out of interest in the myths and legends that go alongside them as well as actively searching for healing for themselves. For example, the Facebook Group 'Holy Wells and Springs of Britain' has more than 12,000 members and within the group people post pictures and discuss local knowledge and folklore as well as spiritual matters and accounts of healing. Water connects us intimately to God's creation, to our baptism, to the idea of cleanness, refreshment or new start, so it is not surprising that people

are attracted by the idea of water as a spiritual marker of change, to go alongside the chance we all have, to start again with Jesus.

In addition, the idea that there is a long history or tradition where people have prayed and found peace, reconciliation and healing as well as encounter with God has a powerful pull for many people who feel they need to go *somewhere* to have that transforming experience for themselves.

So how can the story of St Winefride and the presence of these 'thin' or holy places, inspire us to be instruments of bringing healing to others?

Responding to the Challenge:

- How might the story of St Winefride inspire us to think about the significance of baptism – in our own lives and in those we hope might come to faith?
- What might we learn from reflecting on the story of St Winefride about how God brings healing, peace and reconciliation into our lives?
- Places of miraculous healing are often marked by gifts of gratitude or by walking instruments or other aids left behind. What kinds of 'crutches' have we been using in our daily lives and in our spiritual lives, which now need to be left behind?
- How do we say thank you to God for acts of healing and hope in our own lives and how can we be agents of healing and hope towards others?



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