

Two Mountain Poems

By David Hodges, OCSO

Skellig Michael

From out of the clearing mist,
stuff of legend and myth,
a fortress of solitude
on a rock with two peaks.
Beehive huts face the sea
and the rising sun,
cut from bare rock
with sheer drops beneath,
battling the elements,
withstanding wind, sea and time.
Once home for monks
who fasted and prayed,
fought to survive,
and renounced all for Christ.

And yet more remote
and hidden from view,
a hermitage above,
a step nearer heaven,
barely accessible
except to a saint,
set apart
on the high western peak,
set on a stone ledge,
on the world, western edge.

All long deserted.
Now all that is heard
is the chatter of tourists,
and the shriek of the gull.
All that remains
is the haunting sign
of what once was done
for the glory of God,
on a bare rock
on a changeless sea,
at a time far removed
from our unstable world.



David Hodges, OCSO

David Hodges, OCSO is a monk at the Cistercian Abbey on Caldey Island, off the south coast of Wales. A former solicitor, his poetry has appeared in *The Month*, *Spirituality*, *Hallel*, *Mount Carmel*, *The Tablet*, *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, *The Merton Journal*, and *The Merton Seasonal*. He has published three volumes of poetry on monastic themes, *Songs from Solitude*, *On the Night Tide*, and *Delayed by Rough Seas*.

Mount Snowdon

How can it dare
to be so high?
Of the earth
but of the sky.
Raw beauty whipped by winds,
and cut so sharp and steep
to snatch the breath away
just looking.
Raw terror checked
by my firm foothold,
so far about the ice blue lake
and shining crystal rivers.
Now with a sense of every sense
suspended in the silence
and the healing stillness.
And at once aware,
with all my being rapt
in wonder,
of some seeming presence
ineffable and other,
there in this untamed
threshold of the heavens.
I thought I could
imagine God out walking,
or there to snatch me
like an eagle
with swift wings.
A joy to see it
for a moment all uncovered
in its naked beauty;
but then a squall,
a shifting cloud to mask it all.
Not hard
to imagine hell,
if I'd gone up
in other weather.