



# *R.E. Ideas*

*Spring Term 2005*

## **CELEBRATING SAINT DAVID**

Frances Jenkins, Roch Community School, Pembrokeshire



DEWI SANT, Patron Saint of Wales.

Icon by G. Papageorgiou, at the  
Orthodox Church of the Holy Protection,  
Blaenau Ffestiniog

Saint David, the patron saint of Wales, was a sixth century monk.

We celebrate his life on March 1<sup>st</sup>, which is thought to be the day he died.

Although we do not know much about Saint David, there are many stories which show him as a wonderful example of a caring, gentle man who cared not only for the monks in his monastery, but for all people in need who came to him. He fed the poor, looked after orphans and widows, and gave a warm welcome to those who wanted to learn about God.

David led by example, showing others how they could care for others simply by helping them in small ways.

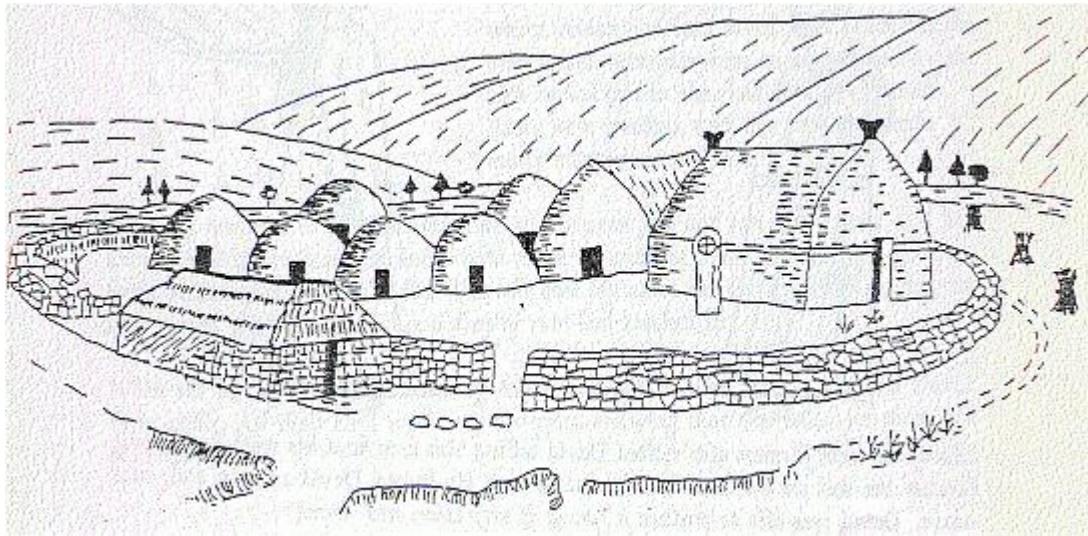
He preached his last great sermon three days before his death, when he said,

*"Remember the little things you have seen and heard me do."* (Philippians 4:9)

David and his friends built twelve monasteries. His most famous monastery was known as *Menevia*. It was built in Vallis Rosina on the rugged coast of Pembrokeshire. The settlement consisted of small wattle and daub huts surrounded by a protective wall. There was also a church with a stone cross, where monks would preach to the people about God. David's monastery no longer exists. Instead, in its place lies the beautiful cathedral of St. Davids.

Men who become monks give up everything they own, so that all of the monks are equal. Discuss with the pupils what is precious to them.

## David's Most Famous Monastery



### Life at David's Monastery

David and his monks followed strict rules. They were so disciplined they were known as ascetic people. David's nickname was "*Aquaticus*," meaning "*Waterman*." He spent many hours up to his neck in water, teaching himself self-discipline.

Anyone wishing to become one of David's monks would have to spend ten days standing outside the gates of the monastery, no matter what the weather was like! During this time the monks would test the man, trying to find out if he had the determination and patience to become a monk.

The monks worked hard. They provided food for the sick and needy, growing crops in their fields and harvesting them. The monks used simple ploughs to turn the soil over. In other monasteries, the weight of the plough was pulled by oxen, but David was so strict that he would not let his monks use oxen; they attached the yoke to their shoulders and pulled the plough themselves! David also ploughed fields in this way. Although this would have been very hard, tiring work, the monks did not complain.

During the evening a bell was rung. This was a sign for the monks to stop whatever they were doing and walk in silence to the monastery church. Whilst in the church the monks chanted beautiful songs from the Bible and knelt to pray to God.

The monks held church services everyday, attending church several times a day. After early morning prayers David would talk with God's angels. We do not know how many times David and his monks went to church each day, but monks today usually have eight services; some can be as short as ten minutes, but it is important for them to attend church through the day and night.

Discuss why monks feel it is important to go to church several times each day.

For further information on Saint David, visit the educational website:  
<http://www.saintdavid.org.uk>

## **What did David and his monks eat?**

The monks ate just enough to give them energy to work. Their diet consisted of bread, herbs and water. Fish was a treat given to the sick, elderly and guests. Meals were served at the same time each day. Eating between meals was not allowed. All monks ate their meals in silence. Only one person could be heard speaking; this was the monk who would be reading or telling a story about God. The monks liked to learn about God whenever they could, even whilst they were having their meals.

Whilst the monks were eating, David would stay in chapel praying to God. He ate very little, often preferring to fast.

### **Ideas for Classroom activities – Key Stage 1**



#### **Being Helpful**

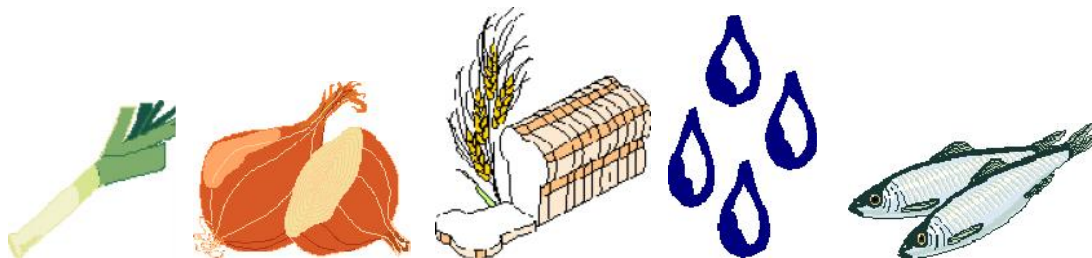
There are many jobs to be done in a monastery, just as there are many things to be done in the children's homes: rooms need to be kept clean and tidy, meals have to be prepared and served, clothes have to be washed and dried.

Focus on the idea of children helping at home. Discuss how they could help e.g. keep their bedroom clean and tidy, put away toys and books, make sure the sink is clean after washing their face and brushing teeth, make sure they do not come into the house with dirty trainers.

Why do children need to help? What would happen if they did not help at home?

How can they help others?

## **What did Saint David eat and drink?**



The above pictures could be placed onto a worksheet. The pupils could overwrite or write in the names of the foods eaten by David and his monks. (The original worksheet can be found on the website <http://www.saintdavid.org.uk> in the teachers site, information about monks).

**Key Stage 2: Design a job advertisement for a monk at**  
**David's monastery at Vallis Rosina**

Look at job advertisements found in local paper and discuss what is common to all. (This could be taught as an English lesson beforehand so that the RE lesson focuses on the content rather than the skills needed to design an advertisement). Discuss requirements of a job advertisement for a monk at David's monastery e.g.

**Title of job:** Monk

**Place of work:** Vallis Rosina / St. Davids

**Type of person needed:** Christian, hard-working, caring, ascetic, honest

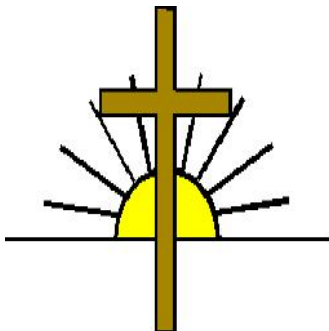
**Type of work:** helping, praying, working in fields, long hours of silence

**Perks of the job:** Learn to read, work with David, travelling (pilgrimages)

After brainstorming ideas, pupils can draw up their own advertisement. It may be beneficial for some pupils to work together.

**JOIN THE MONKS  
AT VALLIS ROSINA**

Learn a lot about God.  
Learn to read and write  
and be a good farmer.  
You need to be able to sing,  
pray in the church  
and be a very caring person.



Kathryn – age 9

**COME and HELP**  
the monks work at Vallis Rosina!

**YOU GET TO WORK WITH DAVID,  
THE MOST FAMOUS MONK IN WALES.**



You must be hard working, interested in God and  
like caring for the sick and elderly.  
You will pray for long hours every day.  
We are looking for an ascetic and trustworthy person.

**YOU GET THE CHANCE TO LEARN TO  
READ AND WRITE  
AND LEARN MORE ABOUT GOD.**

If you are interested contact David at Vallis Rosina.  
**Becoming a monk it will bring you a  
step closer to heaven.**

Danielle - age 10





# *R.E. Ideas*

*Autumn Term 2004*

*Price £1.00*

## **PILGRIMAGE**

*Frances Jenkins, Roch Community School, Pembrokeshire*



*Stand at the crossroads and look.  
Ask for the ancient paths  
And where the best road is,  
Walk on it,  
and you will live in peace.*

Jeremiah 6:16

A pilgrim is traditionally someone who goes on a journey to a special religious place. When a pilgrim visits the special place s/he hopes to get closer to God, to experience God's presence in a special way. The journey itself is called a pilgrimage. It is a popular form of worship.

Many people went on pilgrimages in the Middle Ages because they thought the end of the world would happen soon. Before going on a pilgrimage the pilgrim would have to sort out his business affairs, making sure that his family was well provided for and that he had made his will.

Every year millions of pilgrims from many different religions still go on pilgrimages, whether they are rich or poor, male or female, young or old. Many pilgrims may be in good health, but for some the journey is a journey of hope. Those who are ill may travel to a holy site in the hope of getting better, (such as Lourdes), especially if they have an illness which doctors cannot cure. Long ago, if someone was too ill to go on a pilgrimage, they might have asked a friend to go on a pilgrimage instead of them. There were even people, called *Palmers*, who spent their life going on pilgrimages on behalf of sick people who could not travel themselves. Some people who have recovered from an illness may go on a pilgrimage to give thanks to God for their recovery.

This story inside introduces the character Rhidian, a priest who made a pilgrimage to St. Davids where he took some of the oil burning at the shrine of the saint. This unit of work could also be used as part of a topic celebrating the following:

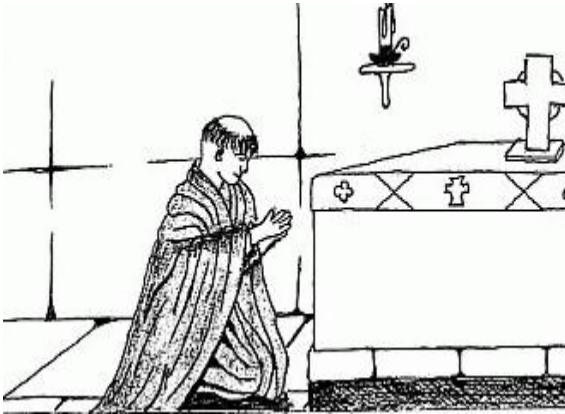
Advent or Christmas (making Christingles), showing the importance of light to Christians;

Diwali (the Hindu / Sikh festival of Lights) and Hanukkah (the Jewish festival of Lights).

Pupils could also explore the significance of the Olympic flame, looking at its journey to Greece, and also the flame kept burning at Kennedy's tomb in the Holocaust Museum in Washington.

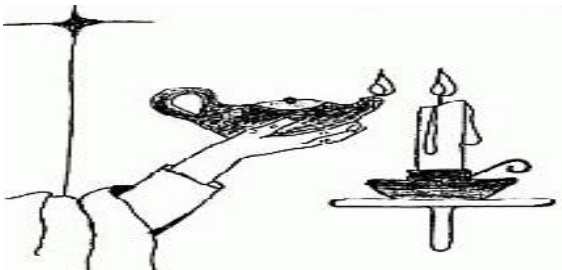
## Rhidian and the Light

### Part 1

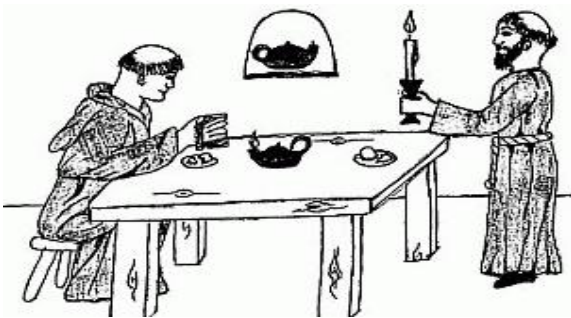


Thirteen centuries ago there lived a priest called Rhidian, who looked after a small church in the Gower peninsula. He went on a special journey - a pilgrimage to St. Davids.

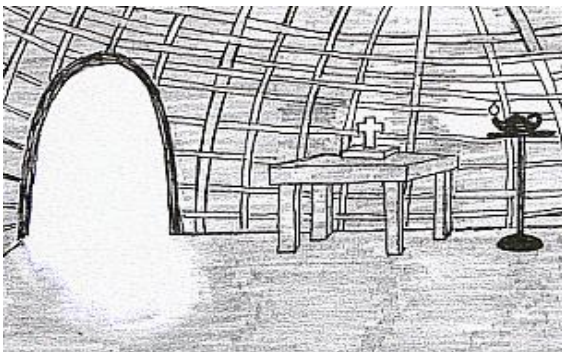
His journey was long and difficult. Since the Romans had left Britain the roads had become overgrown and so he had to travel on rough tracks. However, he was determined to visit the place where Saint David had built his monastery and where David was now buried. Like many other Christians he believed that if he went to this holy site, he would feel closer to God and receive a special blessing. When Rhidian arrived in St. Davids he prayed to God and made an offering (a gift) to the monastery.



Like all pilgrims, he wanted to take something back with him from St. Davids - something which would remind him of his pilgrimage and which would bring him closer to God. So before leaving, he took the small lamp he had brought with him and lit it with the flame which burnt at the altar of David's shrine. Carefully he guarded the flame on his way home, protecting it from the winds which whistled through the trees.



Weary and tired from his travels, Rhidian stopped to spend the night at the house of a friend called Gwynor. Gwynor welcomed Rhidian to his home. During the cold night they sat down to eat a simple meal together and talked about Rhidian's wonderful visit to St. Davids.

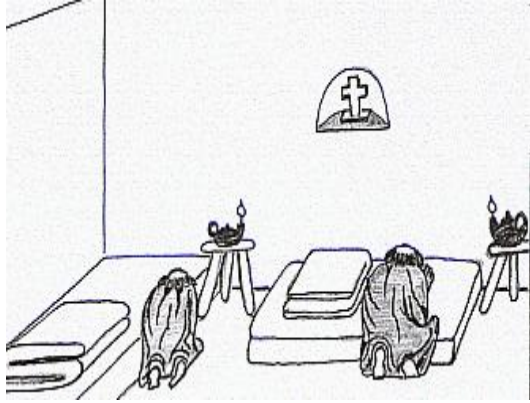


As they talked, Gwynor noticed that Rhidian often glanced at his lamp. He wondered why Rhidian was wasting the precious oil; the house was already lit, so why was Rhidian keeping his lamp alight?

Gwynor was curious and asked his friend about this. Rhidian replied that he was keeping the light burning because the flame was sacred; it had come from the shrine of St. David and he wanted to take it back to his own church, where it's light could be seen by all.

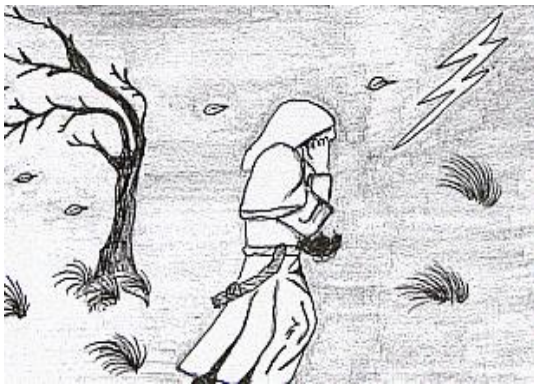
Gwynor thought this was such a wonderful idea that he asked Rhidian if he could share the flame as well, so that he too could light his church with the sacred flame from David's monastery. Rhidian hesitated for a moment . . .

## Part 2



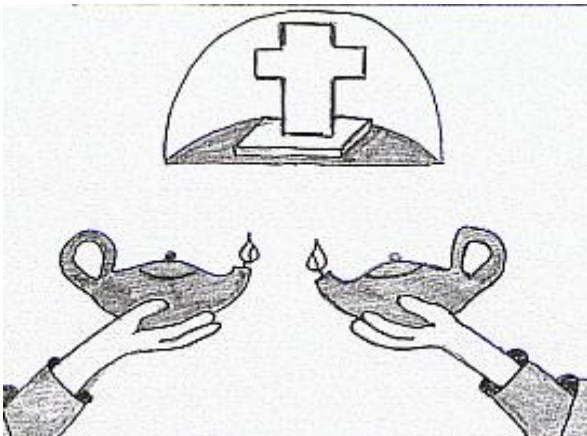
Should he give away some of the light? He had walked many miles through valleys and across rivers to travel to St. Davids and back. The flame was precious to him.

However, he was a Christian. He knew that the flame would be cherished by Gwynor and the people in his church, so he kindly agreed to share the sacred flame with his friend. The feeling of warmth he had from sharing the light made him feel good inside. The two priests finished the evening by praying to God before going to sleep.



The next morning Rhidian set off on the last lap of his journey home. He did not have far to travel, but the weather was changing for the worse. Suddenly he found himself enveloped in a cloak of white as a blizzard of snow and wind swept in from the sea. As his lamp swung in the sudden gust of wind, it blew out the flickering flame. Rhidian felt despair; his precious light from David's shrine had gone.

## Part 3



As Rhidian stood in despair, with the wind whistling and the snow swirling around him, he remembered that he had shared his light with his friend Gwynor. A look of joy spread across his face - all was not lost.

Quickly he turned back towards Gwynor's house. As he walked through the thickening blanket of snow he remembered how he had almost kept the light to himself. He was so pleased that he had shared the flame.

When he reached Gwynor's house his friend was only too willing to let him share the flame from his lamp. Because Rhidian had shared the light, Gwynor was now able to repay his kindness by sharing the light with him. Rhidian said to himself, "I would never have had this light unless I had given it away."

*Many thanks to Cathy Morton for these illustrations.*

## **Lessons Ideas for the story of Rhidian and the Light:**

### **Learning Objectives:**

To appreciate that some people's actions and behaviour are influenced by their religious beliefs.  
To enable pupils to become aware that how they behave affects the way others treat them.  
To explore the ideas of the importance of symbolism (including different faiths).

This work is in the form of three lessons (but of course, you may adapt them to suit your own needs).

### **Lesson 1**

Create a storytelling atmosphere. Discuss with the children the importance of light. Why do we need light? Read and discuss part 1 of the story. Ideas to focus on:

Rhidian has a dilemma - his friend wants to share the sacred flame. Should he do this or not?

What do you think Rhidian will do? Explain your answer.

Discuss dilemmas which pupils have faced. How did they deal with this? Who helped them?

### **Lesson 2**

Recap the story so far. Read and discuss the next part of the story.

Rhidian decided to share the sacred flame with his friend. Is sharing important? Why?

Give pupils the opportunity to discuss what is precious to them.

How would they feel if they lost something which was precious to them?

The two priests prayed to God. Ask pupils to write a prayer which each priest might have said to God, or a dialogue between the two priests. (This idea could be adapted as role play for younger pupils).

### **Lesson 3**

Recap the story so far. Read and discuss the final part of the story.

Why was he so keen to take the flame back to his church and keep it burning?

Jesus once described himself as the "*Light of the world*" (Matthew 5:14-16) Why do you think he chose to describe himself in this way? How would you describe yourself?

Explore Holman Hunt's painting of "The Light of the World."

Design a card reflecting the light from St. David's shrine which Rhidian shared with his friend.

Imagine you are Rhidian. Write a letter to a friend describing your journey. Remember to include your feelings of joy when receiving the light, the despair when you lose it, the hope when you realise you might be able to share the light you have given to Gwynor and the peace of the church with the light burning brightly.

### **RESOURCES from CEMW (*Christian Education Movement Wales*)**

**Resources Catalogue, Publications and past copies of 'R.E. Ideas' available**

**NEW PUBLICATIONS: Primary -** *Y Nadolig – o flwyddyn y flwyddyn*

*Iesu - Ei bwysigrwydd i gredinwyr;*

*Mannau Arbennig – Eu harwyddocad i gredinwyr*

**Secondary –** *What the Welsh Churches say on moral and social issues;*

*Barn yr Eglwysi ar faterion moesol a chyndeithasol.*

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