



# St David (Dewi Sant) and the Troubled Monk

*Moral: Learn to let go of trivial things.*

It so happened that one day, as Dewi Sant wandered the valleys and hills of Wales preaching the gospel, he met a young man who wanted to become a monk. The fellow was very grim-faced and serious but Dewi Sant could see that he was a good man at heart.

“Please let me travel with you to your monastery,” begged the young man earnestly. “I wish to spend my life in prayer and I know that the monks who follow your rule are the holiest in Wales. I’m desperate to become like them and learn everything you can teach me.”

Dewi Sant looked carefully at the man. “My rule is hard,” he said. “My monks and I live very simply on bread, water and the humble leek. We have no time for riches or the things of this world. Our joy is in the scriptures and the word of God. Do you really think you are strong enough to join our community?”

The fellow nodded his head vigorously. “Oh certainly,” he replied. “To be a monk and think only of spiritual things is all I ask from life. Fancy foods mean nothing to me and I have no use for money. Take me with you, Dewi Sant. I promise you will never have cause to regret your decision.”

The youngster was so sincere and stared at Dewi Sant with such a hopeful expression that the holy man could not find it in his heart to refuse him.

“Very well,” he said at last, “let us go and do the Lord’s work.”

The two men set off together on the long road back to the monastery. The young fellow was so delighted that he kept up a stream of excited chatter all morning. Dewi Sant began to long for some peace and quiet but the fellow’s enthusiasm knew no bounds. Then, at last, they came to a crossroads and Dewi Sant broke into his companion’s monologue to say that they should stop and rest for a short while.

As they sat on the grass by the roadside nibbling on crusts of bread and sipping water from a leather bottle, a pretty girl came out from a nearby cottage. She was wearing a beautiful dress that swept down to the ground. Both Dewi Sant and the young man glanced at her as she walked elegantly up to the muddy crossroads. Then the youngster hurriedly looked away and ignored her. The girl



## Background

Tradition has it that St David, or Dewi Sant, as he is known in Welsh, was born in the sixth century to a Christian noblewoman called Non, or Nonna. Apparently, at the time she gave birth to him, a mighty thunderstorm raged and the lightning flooded the place where he was born with brilliant light. Naturally, the local folk felt this was a sign from Heaven that David was destined for great things. As a young man, David wandered far and wide, and there is a story that he travelled as far as the Holy Land, where he was ordained a Christian bishop.

When he returned home to Wales, David set about spreading the Christian gospel. He founded many churches in South Wales. He also built a monastery at his birthplace, where the monks lived simply on a diet of bread, water and vegetables. One of the main sources of vegetable was the wild leek which grew locally, and it has since become the national emblem of Wales, and St David its patron saint. His feast day is March 1st.



## Key questions

- Why do you think the monks lived so simply?
- The young man was very serious, but must people with religious faith be solemn all the time?
- Why do you think Dewi Sant helped the girl?
- Why did the young man pretend to ignore her?
- Why was the young man so upset with Dewi Sant?
- Was it wrong of Dewi Sant to carry the girl and let her kiss him?
- Which of the two men acted in the most Christian way?
- What do you think is the real message of this story?



## Prayer (optional)

I want everyone to close their eyes and think quietly about the story.

*Lord, help us not to worry about the unimportant or the trivial things but always to keep in mind the things that you taught us really matter – kindness, generosity of spirit and charity. Amen.*



## Bible links

Matthew Chapter 5 verse 20 (The necessity of righteousness)



# Why the Robin has a Red Breast

*Moral: Compassion brings its own reward.*

Once, Old King Eagle summoned a great gathering of all the birds. He ordered that one of each species must come to his mountain home. He was determined to review his subjects and see which bird was the cleverest, which the bravest, and so on. The skies grew dark as the huge flocks flew to the appointed meeting place. When the last bird fluttered onto the last remaining space, Old King Eagle spread his mighty wings and ordered the competition to begin.

The peregrine falcon and the spine-tailed swift raced against each other and, although the swift was quicker at flying, the peregrine falcon won by diving down to the finish line. The spine-tailed swift muttered darkly that the falcon had cheated, but Old King Eagle would have none of it.

"Well done," he said to the peregrine falcon. "Now we know which bird is the fastest."

The games continued all day and the penguin was declared to be the best underwater swimmer. The ostrich won the battle of the heavyweights in a closely-fought contest with the emu. The hummingbird beat the wren in the smallest bird stakes, and the ptarmigan beat the opposition out of sight in the camouflage competition. In fact, Old King Eagle had to order it to come out of hiding so that it could collect its prize before the jackdaw stole it. The parrot was voted the best public speaker, the owl won the general knowledge quiz, and the peacock walked away with the beauty contest.

By the end of the day, all of the birds had taken part except the robin. Now, in those times, the robin was a plain brown bird. Its feathers were unremarkable and it was considered by all the other birds to be very dull and uninteresting.

"You are a great disappointment, robin," said Old King Eagle sternly to the shame-faced bird. "Why did you not enter any of the competitions?"

"Because I am not quick or clever or beautiful," answered the sad little creature. "I couldn't see the point."

"You are a disgrace to birdkind," thundered Old King Eagle furiously. "You do not deserve to come to the party. I am banishing you. Fly back to your home at once."

"Yes, Your Majesty," replied the robin sadly. Then he slipped off into the shadows and flew away. No one watched the robin go. He was far too unimportant.

The dejected bird flew all that night and most of the next day. Then, when he grew very tired, he decided to look for somewhere to stop and rest. He glanced down and a terrible sight met his eyes. A group of soldiers were gathered around a man nailed to a wooden cross. The man was bleeding from a cut in his side, and on his head he wore a crown of thorns.

"Why don't the soldiers help the poor man?" thought the horrified robin as he hovered in the air. Then he realised that it was the soldiers who had crucified the man in the first place.

"I must do something," said the robin. "But what can I do? I am too small to frighten the soldiers away and I don't have sharp talons to cut the man's bonds and free him. Old King Eagle spoke the truth when he said I was a disgrace. I am useless."

The robin was about to fly on when the man looked up and saw the tiny bird. The robin had never seen such kindly eyes, but then they clouded with pain. The robin could not bear it, and he fluttered down and plucked out a thorn from the man's head. A drop of blood fell onto the robin's breast and stained his feathers red.

"Thank you little robin," whispered the man. "You may be small and weak but you have a noble heart. From this day on, you and all your kind shall wear your red badge with pride." Then the man closed his eyes and breathed no more.

The robin could hardly see to fly away as his eyes were filled with tears. But then the sun's rays shone brightly on the robin's feathers and the little bird soared up into the sky happy in the knowledge that whenever people saw his red breast they would remember what he had done.

