

Delayed by Rough Seas

The Celtic, pilgrim, sailor saints
set out to find the promised land
in open boats
of skins stretched out on wood:
the Cross and just themselves
was all they carried.
Carrying within their hearts
the God they sought;
exiles for the love of Christ,
they hoped to reach their true home.
Mystics, no longer longing for
an earthly homeland but for
that unattainable other world,
mythical island, Land of Promise, hidden
beyond the vastness of the sea.
Speaking the universal language
of Christ's love,
birds, all nature, joining
in their psalms and chanting,
singing praise to their creator God.
Hunger and thirst they knew,
knowing heaven's fullness.
Their sails full set and flying
through the sacramental sea,
or becalmed and drifting,
shipping oars and trusting
to the providence of God.
Sailing by the stars,
encountering demons,
storms without, within;
what was important was the journey,
delayed by God to teach them secrets
of the ocean, their inner lives.
Fearless they braved the angry sea
but still they feared the final journey
we all must travel to God's presence,
into the dark unknown, alone.

This is the title poem from David Hodges' latest collection of poems,
which will be reviewed in the *Advent Journal*.

The book is available at £6.95 [+70p for UK postage] direct from
The Abbey, Caldey Island, Tenby, Pembrokeshire SA70 7UH, UK,
where David is a Cistercian monk. Web shop: www.cadey-island.co.uk