

**Visit of HRH The Prince of Wales to St Davids Cathedral on 8 July 2021**  
**Words of Welcome from the Dean, the Very Revd Dr Sarah Rowland Jones**

Your Royal Highness, Lord Lieutenant, Bishop Andy, dear friends – Croeso i Eglwys Gadeiriol Tyddewi. We are delighted to welcome you, Sir, especially to see the Shrine of St David, built in 1274, despoiled at the Reformation, and restored in 2012, under my predecessor, Dean Jonathan, also here today.

Of course, for almost 700 years before the Shrine's creation, pilgrims were coming to this valley, finding it one of those 'thin places' where they could feel God's closeness, as Dewi himself had done.

In medieval times, and now, the Shrine offers pilgrims a particular focus – though Shrine, like Saint, is less destination, and more signpost to God's eternal truths of creation and salvation.

Pilgrimage has exploded in recent decades. People of all faiths and none are rediscovering the importance of stepping aside, and taking time for outer and inner journeying, often involving greater connectedness with nature. I suspect Covid is increasing this desire.

Pilgrims may seek answers to questions, solutions to problems, healing for life's wounds, or just yearn for refreshment and renewal. Journeying, then time spent here, so often means returning home in some way changed. Even those considering themselves tourists often find themselves profoundly touched by being in this place.

Our prayer is that everyone coming to St Davids may grow in apprehending God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ, and be drawn forwards on his lifegiving paths.

We are also delighted, Sir, that you can join our celebration of the Church in Wales' centenary. Last year, we planned major services, simultaneously in our six Cathedrals – but because of Covid, here we are: a small service, for a small church in a small nation, though our thanks to God remain boundless.

Let us turn to our service books ...