

Thomas Merton, Celtic Spirituality and the Imagination
Pilgrimage to Iona
September 11 – 20, 2026

Pilgrimage Invitation

You are invited to travel to the Isle of Iona to immerse yourself in a conversation between Thomas Merton, Celtic spirituality, and the Imagination; to pay attention to the ways these wisdom voices invite us to grow more fully into living with greater mercy, courage and action toward all people and ourselves.



Bishop House with Iona Abbey behind



Sunrise from Bishop House

Pilgrimage Itinerary

Two pre-travel zoom preparation gatherings – dates to be announced

September 11, 2026

Gather at Glasgow airport and journey by private coach to Oban.
Overnight at the Columba Hotel in Oban.

September 12, 2026

Journey by ferry and bus to the Island of Iona.
Settle into our accommodations at Bishop's House, Iona.

September 13 – 19, 2026

Engaging the pilgrimage theme of *Thomas Merton, Celtic Spirituality and the Imagination*. Together we will hear the story of Thomas Merton from Merton scholar and writer Sophronia Scott, and we will walk the Isle and hear the stories of its rich Celtic history from pilgrimage leader, Cari Keith. Together and in solitude we will pause to ponder the ways in which imagination and image enables us to live more fully aware of our integration and interconnection with all creation. We will hold in our hands some of the world's most ancient rock and beautiful Iona marble and serpentine. We will journey by small boat to the island of Staffa with its volcanic basalt columns and Fingal's cave – Mendelssohn's inspiration for the Hebrides Overture. We will pay attention to the images created by the beauty around us, the songs we sing, the conversations we share, and the words we write. You will be invited to join the Abbey Community in traditional worship and encouraged to experience worshipping with non-traditional images, language and silence. There will be ample free time for wandering in solitude and for sharing with community.

September 20, 2026

Journey from Iona by bus across Mull and by ferry to Oban
Return to Glasgow airport by private coach arriving by 4:00 pm

Pilgrimage Leaders

Sophronia Scott is a novelist, essayist, and leading contemplative thinker. Her book *The Seeker and the Monk: Everyday Conversations with Thomas Merton* won the 2021 Thomas Merton “Louie” Award from the International Thomas Merton Society. She lives in East Lansing, Michigan and holds a BA in English from Harvard and an MFA in writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts. She is completing a PhD in Creative Writing at Bath Spa University. Her latest book is *Wild, Beautiful, and Free*, a historical novel set during the Civil War. Sophronia’s other books include *Unforgivable Love*, *Love’s Long Line*, and *This Child of Faith: Raising a Spiritual Child in a Secular World*, co-written with her son Tain. Sophronia is the founding director of Alma College’s Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Creative Writing, a low-residency graduate program based in Alma, Michigan.

Cari Keith is an experienced pilgrimage leader and passionate pilgrimage participant. She is an ordained Minister and Spiritual Director who engages faith practice through an integrated lens of depth psychology, interspirituality, ecology and community. Cari’s spiritual practices include dream work, writing and paying attention to the awe and mystery of life. Her educational background includes New Brunswick Seminary, the Guild for Spiritual Guidance, and Hartford Seminary

John Keith is an accomplished guitar and vocal musician who will travel with us. He is an environmental scientist with deep global knowledge of environmental issues, from large nations to small islands. He is actively engaged with several environmental NGOs working on environmental challenges in poor countries.

Pilgrimage Cost

Shared Room: \$3800

Private Room: \$4100

Includes all ground transportation in Scotland, taxes, gratuities, 7-nights on Iona, 1-night in Oban, and 3 meals per day with the exclusion of 3 lunches.

Not covered in the pilgrimage cost:

Airfare to and from Scotland, lodging before or after the trip, personal travel insurance (strongly encouraged), meals and snacks not noted above, all alcohol, bottled water for walks, and personal items (batteries, gifts, sundries, etc.).

In the *Seeker and the Monk*, Sophronia Scott writes, “*Prayer is a mystery, with so many paths to walk, so many branches of communication, so many pools of wonder. But it’s also like you and me, Thomas, standing on the edge of one of the pools near Gethsemani. You’re pointing to a spot: dive in there. We just have to begin.*”

Come and dive in with us. Come join us in beginning!

For registration information and questions please contact Cari Keith:

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