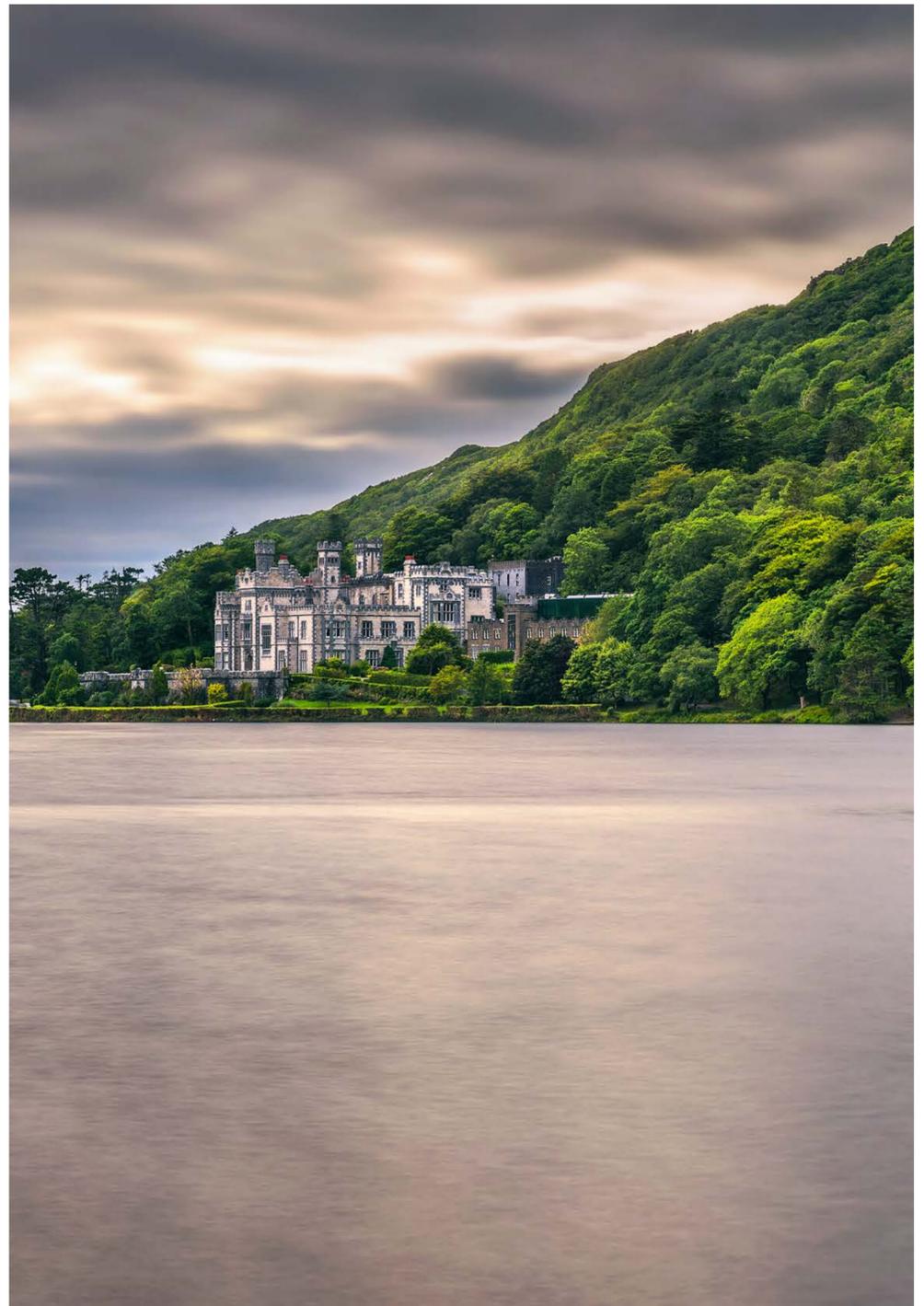


Ask Me

By William Stafford

Some time when the river is ice ask me mistakes I have made. Ask me whether what I have done is my life. Others have come in their slow way into my thought, and some have tried to help or to hurt: ask me what difference their strongest love or hate has made.

I will listen to what you say.
You and I can turn and look
at the silent river and wait. We know
the current is there, hidden; and there
are comings and goings from miles away
that hold the stillness exactly before us.
What the river says, that is what I say.



There are moments each of us stops to consider our life, things we have done or neglected, mistakes, harm, passing pleasures. We might be 25 or 75; it's always a moment in time, frozen and still. That is the nature of deep personal reflection. Below the frozen reflection life goes on. Life flows. In, around, through us the flow of life is speaking to us. When I imagine what the flow of life might be telling us I am drawn to a quote by Bryan Stevenson in his book *Just Mercy*. "Each of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done." He spoke on NPR a few weeks ago. He inspires me, as does this poem by Stafford, to stay attentive to my "best self" and "my darkest self," not that I must choose between them but that I may learn the difference and consider how to resolve the tension within me. If I can do that, I might make new commitments to live well this one life. Perhaps this week each of us might allow that "frozen moment" of reflection. We might listen to our life, to our questions, to the tensions unresolved and then to the flow of life within us. What are our new commitments to live well, reimagining our life?

