

THE WELLSRING COMMUNITY INC

PILGRIMAGE 2003



COMMENCING THE PILGRIMAGE

NEIL HOLM

©The Wellspring Community Inc 2003
PO Box 488, Mt Druitt, NSW 2770
Phone 02 9835 2970 Fax 02 9835 3720

Leader of the Community
Anne McPherson
Phone 02 45677269 E-mail AnneSMcP@aol.com

COMMENCING THE PILGRIMAGE

Thanks for joining the pilgrimage. As Bishop Demetri says below: **Our pilgrimage begins the moment we decide upon going.**

As I said in the brochure in the last issue of *Pipeline*, John Connor, Eugene Stockton and I are preparing a set of devotional materials as part of our contribution to the pilgrimage.

I have prepared this first instalment without consulting the others. In this guide to pilgrimage, I try to use the term pilgrimage in two senses. The first is for those who will travel to Alice Springs and Uluru on the Wellspring Community Pilgrimage in July 2003. The second is for those who are commencing a personal pilgrimage. Please let me know if the words do not reflect both meanings.



This instalment is called *Commencing the Pilgrimage*. I suggest that you use it over a four-week period. It has seven segments: one for each day of the week. Day 7 is a liturgy that may work well on a Sunday or another day when you are able to be a little more reflective. I recommend that you revisit each segment four times before moving to the next instalment. I have included some suggestions for prayer or reflection at the end of each segment. There is too much to attempt in any one day. As you revisit the segments, you may like to follow up a different suggestion.

I will try to send successive instalments out so that they reach you before the 15th of each month. All going well we will attempt the following sequence:

Instalment 1:	January/February:	Commencing the Pilgrimage
Instalment 2:	February/March	Finding spiritual meaning in the desert and other places
Instalment 3:	March/April	Finding spiritual meaning in nature and animals
Instalment 4:	April/May	Finding spiritual meaning in relationships
Instalment 5:	May/June	Finding spiritual meaning in the stranger or the other
Instalment 6:	June/July	Great pilgrims and great pilgrimages.

But as I said before, this is a work in progress and who knows where the Spirit will lead!

Please send us material that you think might be useful. I would love this to be a cooperative effort. Eugene, John and I are all flat chat so offers of help will be welcome. If you think you could prepare an instalment, please let me know. I may even invite some of you to assist because now the task looks pretty daunting!

I would be thrilled to get some responses by 3 February. I could include it in the next instalment. As we have already commenced the pilgrimage, comments would establish a small form of communication and relationship building between us. It could be one of your first steps of the pilgrimage in self-disclosure. It could be a small step in vulnerability. It would be an important step in building community.

Each segment commences with an extract from the writings of several people. In most cases, I have not changed the words of the author. In the few cases where I have done so eg Tom Wright and Ian Bradley, I paraphrased their words on a few occasions.

Salem-al-salakim--Peace

Neil Holm
(PO Box 465, Kings Cross NSW 1340)
neil-margaret.holm@bigpond.com

Day 1: Christian Pilgrimage Today

Tom Wright: *The Way of the Lord, Christian Pilgrimage Today*, Triangle/SPCK, 1999

A pilgrim is someone who goes on a journey in the hope of encountering God, or meeting him in a new way. (p.13)

The idea of pilgrimage can be ambiguous for Christians. Those who imagine that going on a geographical pilgrimage will automatically make them holy, or bring them closer to God, are doomed to disappointment or worse.” However, “those who imagine that they therefore have nothing to gain from going on pilgrimage, whether to Jerusalem, Canterbury, Iona, Lindisfarne or even Litchfield [let alone Uluru!], may be missing out on a pointer to the reality which we all seek. As long as we do not see the signposts as the reality, they can remain true and helpful signposts. (p.16)

At the empty tomb the “Come, see the place” is balanced by “He is not here, he is risen”. And because he is risen, ascended and glorified, we may and often will meet Jesus in the most unlikely and unexpected places: not only in cathedrals and obvious holy places, not only in liturgy and music, but in the street, the school and slum, in the poor and the suffering. (p. 17)

The truth of the matter is that it is not we, ultimately, who are on a journey looking for God in the face of Jesus. It is God who is on a journey looking for us. When our restlessness sends us off on a journey of our own making, we may perhaps find God coming to meet us, going in the opposite direction, so that our meeting happens like two express trains colliding. (p. 17)

In all our pilgrimages, we begin by going back to our roots. . . . We need, on a regular basis, to take stock, to see where we’ve come from, to lay our lives before our loving God and to ask to a fresh sense of direction. . . . We need, in prayer and reflection, to get in touch with our roots: to become aware in a fresh way of who we are and where we have come from, and particularly with how we came to Christian faith, . . . ; to review what we have built on that foundation, where we have come from in our pilgrimage. (p. 19)

In our pilgrimage to the Centre, we set out on a journey hoping, expecting, that we will meet God coming to us in the other direction. We hope and expect that God will break into our lives afresh, perhaps confronting us as he did Edwin Muir:

Last night, going to bed alone, I suddenly found myself (I was taking off my waistcoat) reciting the Lord’s Prayer in a loud, emphatic voice – a thing I had not done for many years – with a deep urgency and profound disturbed emotion. While I went on I grew more composed; as if it had been empty and craving and were being replenished, my soul grew still; every word had a strange fullness of meaning which astonished and delighted me. It was late; I had sat up reading; I was sleepy; but as I stood in the middle of the floor half-undressed, saying the prayer over and over, meaning after meaning sprang from it, overcoming me again with joyful surprise. (p. 20)

Suggestions

1. Read and reflect on the collision between God and Saul (Acts 9).
2. Read and reflect on the encounter with the risen Christ in Matthew 28.
3. Go back to your roots, review your pilgrimage: who are you? Where have you come from?
4. Are there prayers or events that were once full of meaning for you but now lie dormant? Take some time to reflect and meditate. Take some time to allow God to overcome you again with joyful surprise.
5. Write a prayer. You may like to modify this prayer: May our pilgrimage bring us face to face with the one in whom we see the love of God turned toward us, and send us on our way to serve him afresh in his world. (p.22)
6. Start a “pilgrimage journal”. Keep a record of what God is doing with you over the next few months.

Day 2: A Celtic Perspective on Pilgrimage

Ian Bradley: *The Celtic Way*. Darton, Longman, Todd, 1993

The almost perpetual state of wandering which characterised the lives of many Celtic monks and saints was in part an aspect of their asceticism and desire to follow the path of renunciation and self-denial. Pilgrimage was conceived of as a kind of perpetual exile from the comforts and distractions of home. It often seems to have been undertaken as a penance, sometimes on the suggestion of a soul friend or confessor. *Peregrination* was described as “seeking the place of one’s resurrection.

There was, of course, a clear scriptural impulse behind this desire for exile and pilgrimage. The Celts were consciously responding to Our Lord’s oft-repeated call to his disciples to leave home and family and follow him. They were also mindful of the fact that Jesus himself had led a wandering and unsettled existence and of his remark that “foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath nowhere to lay his head” (Matt. 8:20)

They often sought out the most desolate, isolated, barren places, staying there a while in their simple beehive cells before moving on again. Here another influence was clearly at work: the example of the desert fathers like St Antony who had established a pattern of discipleship based on withdrawal from the world and solitary contemplation. . . . Lacking the barren sandy wildernesses of Egypt and Syria, Celtic monks made for the most barren and remote spots in the British Isles.

Retreat to these places often followed or preceded a period of intense missionary activity or involvement in administrative affairs of a busy monastery.

The Celts themselves were well aware of the difference between genuine *peregrinatio* and the restlessness and escapism to which they were prone as a race. . . . [They spoke of] three kinds of pilgrimage. The first, leaving one’s country in a physical sense but with no inner change of heart, is dismissed as a waste of time and energy. The second, earnestly desiring to leave everything familiar and comfortable behind and embark on a life of pilgrimage but being forced by pressing duties to remain at home, is recognised as a worthy calling. The third, leaving one’s country for God and forsaking a life of comfort and ease for one of austerity and virtue, is regarded as the highest calling of all.

Stress on the importance of the inner journey of repentance, resurrection and rebirth leads us to the heart of the Celtic idea of pilgrimage. *Peregrinatio* was the outward expression of inner change, a metaphor and symbol for that journey towards deeper faith and greater holiness and towards God which is the Christian life. To be a pilgrim was to live in imitation of Jesus, to take up his cross and to recognise that in this transitory world we have no abiding city. (p.80, 81)

One of the great Celtic pilgrims was Columbanus who frequently meditated on the theme of pilgrimage in the Christian life. He likens life to a road or a journey and points to the dangers of being distracted by the way and mistaking it for the ultimate destination. His words may help us to re-examine our Christian journeys or challenge us as we consider our reasons for joining the pilgrimage:

A road to life art thou, not Life . . . And there is no man makes his dwelling on the road, but walks there: and those who fare along the road have their dwelling in the fatherland. So thou art, O mortal life, naught but a road, a fleeting ghost, an emptiness, a cloud uncertain and frail, a shadow and a dream . . .

Therefore let us concern ourselves with heavenly things and not human ones, and like pilgrims always sigh for our homeland, long for our homeland. It is the end of the road that travellers look for and desire, and because we are travellers and pilgrims through this world, it is the road’s end, that is of our lives, that we should always be thinking about . . . Don’t let us love the road more than the land to which it leads. (p.81)

The idea of pilgrimage is one that we badly need to recover today. Contemporary Christianity can be dangerously static . . . We are often very reluctant to accept that faith is something that develops and

grows gradually and which involves taking risks and being prepared to follow detours and false trails as we seek out the right way.

Suggestions

1. Celtic Christians had a very clear sense of the transience and impermanence of this life and of their status as pilgrims and strangers. But they also had a clear feel for the essential goodness of the world, their enjoyment of the beauties of creation and their positive and affirmative view of nature, including human nature. (p.82) You may like to create (in writing or other form) a mission statement for your pilgrimage that attempts to balance the sense of transience with the sense of beauty of God's world. You may like to imagine meeting some of your fellow pilgrims in a year's time: what would they say about you on the pilgrimage? How would you like them to remember you from the pilgrimage? What might they say about your collision with God on the pilgrimage? What difference would you have liked to have made in their lives? What difference would you have liked them (or God) to have made in your life? How did the pilgrimage change your life?
2. Read, reflect and meditate on Matthew Chapters 8 and 9; Ephesians 3: 14-21; Hebrews 12.
3. For Celtic Christians *peregrinatio* often followed or preceded a time to intense activity. Where does this *peregrinatio* fit in your life? I sense that it occurs at a critical time for the Wellspring Community. Do you sense this? Why?
4. Does Sydney Carter's *One More Step* connect with you?

One more Step

*One more step along the world I go,
One more step along the world I go.
From the old things to the new
Keep me travelling along with you.
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
Keep me travelling along with you.*

*Round the corner of the world I turn,
More and more about the world I learn.
All the new things that I see
You'll be looking at along with me.
Chorus*

*As I travel through the bad and good,
Keep me travelling the way I should.*

*Where I see no way to go
You'll be telling me the way, I know.
Chorus*

*Give me courage when the world is rough,
Keep me loving though the world is tough.
Leap and sing in all I do,
Keep me travelling along with you.
Chorus*

*You are older than the world can be,
You are younger than the life in me.
Ever old and ever new,
Keep me travelling along with you.
Chorus*

5. What is the most desolate, isolated, barren place near you today? Can you stay there a while until God meets you today?

Day 3: An Orthodox (Antiochan) Perspective on Pilgrimage

Bishop Demetri

1) Why Do Christians Go on a Pilgrimage?

As diverse as are the persons who make pilgrimages, so are the many good motivations for deciding to make a pilgrimage:

- Some are seeking inspiration, out of a desire to gain a new perspective, or change of mind and heart.
- Some are deeply questioning their life's purpose, seeking God's divine will.
- Some are committed to the idea and practice of pilgrimage. They may not know why they are making a pilgrimage, but are following their feelings and intuition.
- Some seek to purify their hearts, replacing confusion with clarity.
- Some want to take the time to place themselves in the proper setting so that they may concentrate on a particular subject, or put into practice a direction given to them from their spiritual father.
- Some are doing penance.
- And some simply want to calm their minds and find the peace that only communion with God can bring.

I am not going to guess what your personal reason may be . . . your reason for coming is yours alone . . . between you and God . . . but your purpose for coming will shape the way in which you will benefit from your journey.

2) What is a Pilgrimage and Why is Pilgrimage Important to our Spiritual Growth?

- What value is there in making a pilgrimage?
- How can it be of benefit to us?
- Why should we make the effort, when we can stay at home and pray, without all of the expense and trouble?

I am certain that this line of reasoning is the chief reason that most Orthodox Christians in America do not give consideration to planning or making a pilgrimage, as you have. There seems to be a general forgetfulness of the time-honored practice of Christian Pilgrimage, one that is as old as the Church herself. In her two millennia, Christians have made journeys for their spiritual benefit:

- to places where Our Lord lived out His life
- to places where Our Lord, His Holy Apostles, and the Saints who came after them, performed miracles for the glory of God
- to the places where these holy men and women of God lived their lives
- and to the holy places where their relics are enshrined.

It is not difficult to find accounts of Holy Pilgrimages in the early Christian Church. The early church historian Eusebius of Caesarea writes of a second-century pilgrimage of Bishop Melito of Sardis, and a third century pilgrimage of Bishop Alexander of Cappadocia to Jerusalem. We are all familiar with the accounts of Saint Helen, the mother of St. Constantine, and her pilgrimages to the Holy land, which resulted in the finding the True Cross . . . the place of the Nativity of our Lord . . . the Holy Sepulcher where our Lord was laid . . . and the place of the Ascension from Mount Olivet. All of these sites have remained places of pilgrimage where millions of faithful people have come since their blessed re-discovery.

It profits our souls to visit those special places that have been imbued with the grace-filled life of holy saints. Just being there affects our souls. While we are there, we should be moved by what we experience to resolve to use each moment, each minute, hour and day, to live for God by His Grace, to put away sin . . . and to love God and our brothers and sisters. This is truly an encounter with spiritual reality, and we benefit from that encounter.

With this understanding, we can accurately define the word "pilgrimage". **A pilgrimage, then, can be described as a journey to a holy place for a spiritual purpose.** Some may focus on the journey as being the central and significant part of a pilgrimage. They may be thinking of long and sometimes

difficult trips to far off and exotic lands. To a non-believer, these attitudes make a pilgrimage sound more like a vacation or a pleasure trip.

Certainly, focusing on the travel itself is not proper for an authentic pilgrimage. Unfortunately, our American society has taught us to look for the entertainment value in everything we do . . . even in our worship. **My brothers and sisters in Christ, a pilgrimage is not a vacation . . . it is not holy entertainment.** If this is your focus when you make your pilgrimages, you will have your benefit the moment you arrive and depart, and nothing but memories and some photographs to show for it. The true focus of a pilgrimage is, of course, its spiritual purpose. I am not saying that the journey itself is not important. The journey serves the spiritual purpose, and not the other way around. The journey is an integral part of the spiritual purpose because of the character of its sacrifice, its intensity, and its witness to the True Faith.

Our pilgrimage begins the moment we decide upon going. At that moment, we begin our prayers to God that our journey will be beneficial to our soul . . . that it be one that will bring us closer to God, and closer to our goal of uniting with Him. This is how we establish the spiritual purpose of our pilgrimage. In this manner, everything that happens from that point until our return home will come to serve our spiritual purpose. . . .

7) Conclusion

You can now see what a great blessing it is for us to be here on this Holy Pilgrimage, here on this Holy Mountain. This is how we gather the spiritual fruit of our effort to make this journey. This is why it is vital to our spiritual health that we as Christians make Holy Pilgrimages. Consider yourself now to be Ambassadors for God when you go to your homes. Tell your family, friends and fellow parishioners about your experience here. Tell them about the true value of making a Holy Pilgrimage, and encourage them to do so. Pilgrimage must be a part of the spiritual life of every Orthodox Christian.

It is my prayer that each of you will return to your homes enriched and revitalized after what you will experience. . . . During your stay, you will be given many opportunities to learn more about your faith. . . . We will have many opportunities to pray together, and you will have time to pray and meditate in private. . . . And you will have the opportunity to spend time in fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ; bound by our single spiritual purpose . . . to seek union with our God.

It is my hope that each of you will have a spiritually rewarding pilgrimage... and I look forward to spending the coming days with you in prayer and fellowship. Thank you, and may God bless all of you!

For the full text of Bishop Demetri's address, see
http://www.antiochian.org/midwest/Articles/The_Meaning_of_Pilgrimage.htm

Suggestions

1. Bishop Demetri defines a pilgrimage as a journey to a holy place for a spiritual purpose. How is the destination of our pilgrimage a "holy place"? Consider again your spiritual purpose in commencing the pilgrimage.
2. Read and reflect on Psalms 15 and 24, Matthew Chapters 5 to 7, Micah 6: 1-8.

Day 4: A Catholic Perspective on Pilgrimage

Pope John Paul

In the course of its history, the institution of the Jubilee has been enriched by signs which attest to the faith and foster the devotion of the Christian people. Among these, the first is the notion of *pilgrimage*, which is linked to the situation of man who readily describes his life as a journey. From birth to death, the condition of each individual is that of the *homo viator*.

Sacred Scripture, for its part, often attests to the special significance of setting out to go to sacred places. There was a tradition that the Israelites go on pilgrimage to the city where the Ark of the Covenant was kept, or visit the shrine at Bethel (cf *Jg* 20:18), or the one at Shiloh where the prayer of Samuel's mother, Hannah, was heard (cf *1 Sam* 1:3). Willingly subjecting himself to the Law, Jesus too went with Mary and Joseph as a pilgrim to the Holy City of Jerusalem (cf. *Lk* 2:41).

The history of the Church is the living account of an unfinished pilgrimage. To journey to the city of Saints Peter and Paul, to the Holy Land, or to the old and new shrines dedicated to the Virgin Mary and the Saints: this is the goal of countless members of the faithful who find nourishment for their devotion in this way.

Pilgrimages have always been a significant part of the life of the faithful, assuming different cultural forms in different ages. A pilgrimage evokes the believer's personal journey in the footsteps of the Redeemer: it is an exercise of practical asceticism, of repentance for human weaknesses, of constant vigilance over one's own frailty, of interior preparation for a change of heart. Through vigils, fasting and prayer, the pilgrim progresses along the path of Christian perfection, striving to attain, with the support of God's grace, "the state of the perfect man, to the measure of the full maturity of Christ" (*Eph* 4:13).

From *Incarnationis mysterium: Bull of indiction of the great jubilee of the year 2000*. For full text see: http://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/docs/documents/hf_jp-ii_doc_30111998_bolla-jubilee_en.html

Suggestions:

Read Bible passages connected with the sacred sites the Pope refers to in paragraph 2 above:

- Bethel: Genesis 12:8, 13:3, 31:13, 35:1-15, 28:11-22. Judges 20:18-28, 21:1-4, 1 Samuel 7:16, 10:3
- Shiloh: Judges 21:19, 28:31, Joshua 28:1, 1 Samuel 1:3-9
- Jerusalem: Luke 2: 41-52

Meditate on one of them using the following process.

Pause, Presence, Picture, Ponder, Promise, Pray

(Adapted from *David Adam The Cry of the Deer, Triangle/SPCK, 1987, pp. 19-20.*)

Pause

Stop what you are doing. Let yourself relax; let all the tension go out of your body, all troubled thoughts out of your mind. Make space in your life for something to happen. Make room for God.

Let go, and let God.

Breathe slowly and deeply.

Be still.

Presence:

Know that God is with you.

This is the purpose of this exercise--to discover that God is with you.

'God unseen yet ever near

Thy Presence may I feel.'

The Presence is to be enjoyed.

Let God take over. Do not try to do anything at this stage but to be aware of Him and rest in His

Presence. Make little acts of affirmation.

'Lord you are here. Help me to know it'
'Lord you are love. Help me to receive you.'

Picture:

What this fact of Presence means for you today as you imagine yourself on a pilgrimage to one of the sacred places the Pope lists in paragraph 2 above. A you picture it remember: Your God is with you: you dwell in Him and He in you. He is with you at this sacred place.

Ponder:

Think what this should mean for you in this new situation.
We are never alone. There is an abiding Presence; strength, love, peace, forgiveness are ever at hand.
'My Presence will go with you and I will give you rest.'

Promise:

To recall the fact of His Presence throughout the day. Perhaps God will move you to make another promise based on your experience.

Pray

Day 5: Pilgrimage: Seeking the Place of One's Resurrection

David Adam: *The Cry of the Deer*, Triangle/SPCK, 1987, pp. 47-55

The Celtic Christians described *Peregrinatio* as "seeking the place of one's resurrection." David Adams amplifies this idea. He describes game-keepers in the high moors burning off heather in terms that remind Australians of burning off in our land. The land seems charred, black, and dead but soon new growth arises, phoenix-like, from the ashes. Adams continues:

Here for me was a picture of the Resurrection: the old body may be destroyed, yet the essential being will not perish, but have everlasting life. Watching the fire, I looked forward to the new green shoots. An old French tune came to mind and the words, 'Love is come again':

*In the grave they laid him, Love
whom men had slain,
Thinking that never he would wake
again.
Laid in the earth, like grain that
sleeps unseen:
Love is come again;
Like wheat that springeth green.*

*Forth he came at Easter, like the
risen grain
He that for three days in the grave
had lain.*

*Quick from the dead my risen Lord is
seen:
Love is come again
Like wheat that springeth green*

*When our hearts are wintry, grieving
or in pain,
Thy touch can call us back to life
again.
Fields of our hearts that dead and
bare have been:
Love is come again
Like wheat that springeth green.*

Leaving the game-keepers and the burning off, I returned home strangely warmed, not by their fire, but by the Presence of the Risen Lord. There on the moor He had come again, and for me the day was no longer dull and grey.

In many ways the Celtic Church took the Resurrection for granted, because they experienced in their lives and worship the real Presence of the Risen Lord. There was no need for them to go back continually to the tomb and puzzle over it. They were not concerned about the empty tomb, they sought their Lord among the living. They took to heart the words of Scripture spoken to the followers of Jesus: 'Why are you looking among the dead for the one who is alive? He is not here; He has been raised'.

Not only the Incarnate but the Risen Christ is there to be discovered. If you asked the Celt where is Jesus now, the reply would be very similar to the one Procula received from Longinus in Masfield's play, *The Trial of Jesus*. She asked, 'Do you think he is dead?' and he replied, 'No, lady, I don't.' When asked, 'Then where is he?' Longinus replied, 'Let loose in the world, lady.' The Risen Christ is 'let loose in the world'.

He is now to be met, to be discovered in our world. He can still be found in the garden, or on the seashore. The Resurrection stories will only make sense if we still experience and affirm His Presence as a reality.

After a while the disciples went fishing again . . . They returned to work. It was in that ordinary place, while they were working, that He appeared on the shore. Now He had been seen by individuals and groups; in the garden, on the road, at a meal in a living room, on the beach. Wherever they were, He came. No one returned to the tomb, for He had robbed it. They had no doubt that, whether they were in boat or barn, toiling or resting, their Lord went with them. They would naturally talk to Him, without any affectation ask Him to help them and to share their tasks. The Lord went with them and worked through them. .

Too often we talk of Jesus as if He were a figure in history; we speak of what He did, what He has done, as if it were all over and finished with. We relegate Jesus to Palestine. But He is 'loose in the world'. With the Celt, we must learn to talk to Him rather than talk about Him. We must discipline

ourselves so that we talk of Him in the present tense: 'Jesus is . . .' It is good to make statements and affirmations about Him in the present. Celebrate the Presence in the Present. For He is the Resurrection and He is here with us now. Today, I arise in the strength of His Resurrection.

The Ascension is the completing of the mission of Christ. He came down so that He could lift man up. He became man so that man could become Divine. The whole purpose of the Incarnation was to free us from the bonds of this world and lift us up to where He has gone before. –

My favourite image of the Ascension comes from the earthly life of Jesus. Jesus is up in the mountains with the Father when a storm hits His disciples and threatens to engulf them. He comes down to where they are, to be with them in the storm. Somehow or other, though He is in the storm, He is above it. It does not swamp Him. He walks the waves. So He enters the storms and tempests of our lives. Peter is encouraged by the Presence and risks walking on the stormy water. For a while he appears to be able-- it is amazing what we can achieve--but then, naturally he begins to sink. . . Jesus does not let him sink to the depths; He will not let him perish. He reaches out His hand and raises him.

Suggestions

1. Go out of your house today. Seek the Christ who is let loose in the world. Pray that God will collide with you so that, like Adams, you will return home strangely warmed by the Presence of the Risen Lord. In your street may you know that He has come again. May your day be no longer dull and grey.
2. Speak to someone of Jesus in the present tense. Affirm: “Jesus is . . . Jesus is alive . . . Jesus is life . . . Jesus is . . .“
3. Reflect on *St. Patrick's Breastplate Prayer*
I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through the belief in the threeness,
Through confession of the oneness
Of the Creator of Creation.

I arise today
Through the strength of Christ's birth with his baptism,
Through the strength of his crucifixion with his burial,
Through the strength of his resurrection with his ascension,
Through the strength of his descent for the judgment of Doom.
4. Read and reflect on Matthew 14: 22-36; Luke 24: 13-32, 1 Corinthians 15: 8-20.

Day 6: The Way of a Pilgrim

Henri Nouwen: *Reaching Out*. Doubleday, 1975, pp.140-147

Among the many spiritualities, styles of prayer and ways to God, there is one way that is relatively unknown but might prove to have special relevance in our contemporary spiritual climate. That is the spirituality of Hesychasm, one of the oldest spiritual traditions in the Eastern Orthodox Church, which lately received new attention in the West through the publication of an English edition of *The Way of a Pilgrim*. Rather than giving short descriptions of different spiritual ways, it seems more valuable to discuss in some detail just one way: the way of the Hesychasts. This is valuable not only because Hesychasm illustrates much that has been said but also because what it says has a remarkably modern ring to it

While all of us are called to search with diligence and perseverance for the prayer of our own heart-- i.e., the prayer that is most our own and that forms our unique way of reaching out to our God-- Hesychasm makes the a prayer of the heart its central concept, gives it a very concrete content and offers explicit guidelines to realize it.

What, then is Hesychasm? Hesychasm (from the Greek word *hesychi=repose*) is a spiritual tradition that found its beginnings in the fifth century, developed in the monasteries on Mount Sinai and later on Mount Athos, was found very much alive during the spiritual renewal in nineteenth-century Russia, and is gradually being discovered by the West as one of the most valuable "schools" of prayer. The prayer in which the hesychastic tradition finds its deepest expression is the Jesus prayer consisting of the simple words: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me." Timothy Ware says concerning the Jesus prayer:

...around these few words many Orthodox over the centuries have built their spiritual life and through this one prayer they have entered into the deepest mysteries of Christian knowledge.

There is probably no simpler nor livelier way to understand the richness of Hesychasm and the Jesus prayer than by listening to the remarkable story of an anonymous Russian peasant who wandered through his vast country discovering with growing amazement and inner joy the marvelous fruits of the Jesus prayer. In *The Way of a Pilgrim* his story is written down, most probably by a Russian monk whom he met on his journey.

A few years ago I spent three days in retreat with two close friends. Most of the time we kept silence but after dinner we read to each other the story of the pilgrim. To our own surprise this pleasant and charming spiritual book had a profound influence on us and opened for us a new and very simple way to pray in the midst of our very restless and hectic lives. We still talk about those days as "the days with the pilgrim."

In *The Way of a Pilgrim* the Russian peasant tells us how he goes from town to town, church to church and monk to monk to find out how to pray without ceasing (see 1 Thessalonians 5:17). After having heard many sermons and consulted many people in vain, he finds a holy starets (monk) who teaches him the Jesus prayer. The starets first reads to him the following words of Simeon the New Theologian:

Sit down alone and in silence. Lower your head, shut your eyes, breathe out gently and imagine yourself looking into your own heart. Carry your mind, i.e., your thoughts, from your head to your heart. As you breathe out say: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." Say it moving your lips gently, or say it in your mind. Try to put all other thought aside. Be calm, be patient and repeat the process very frequently.

After having read this to his visitor, the starets instructs him to say the Jesus prayer three thousand times ; each day, then six thousand times, then twelve thousand times and finally-as often as he wants. The pilgrim is very happy to have found a master and follows carefully his instructions. He says:

Under this guidance I spent the whole summer in ceaseless oral prayer to Jesus Christ, and I felt absolute peace in my soul. During sleep I often dreamed that I was saying the Prayer. And during the day, if I happened to meet anyone, all men without exception were as dear to me as

if they had been my nearest relations. I thought of nothing whatever but my Prayer, my mind tended to listen to it, and my heart began of itself to feel at times a certain warmth and pleasure.

After the death of his holy starlets, the peasant wanders from town to town with his prayer. The prayer has given him new strength to deal with all the adversities of the pilgrim life and turns all pains into joy:

At times I do as much as forty-three or -four miles a day, and do not feel that I am walking at all. I am aware only of the fact that I am saying my Prayer. When the bitter cold pierces me, I begin to say my Prayer more earnestly and I quickly get warm all over. When hunger begins to overcome me, I call more often on the Name of Jesus and I forget my wish for food. When I fall ill and get rheumatism in my back and legs, I fix my thoughts on the Prayer and do not notice the pain. If anyone harms me, I have only to think, "How sweet is the Prayer of Jesus!" and the injury and the anger alike pass away and I forget it all.

The pilgrim, however, has no illusions. He realizes that, notwithstanding these events, his prayer had not yet become the prayer of the heart in the fullest sense. The starlets had told him that all these experiences are part of "an artificial state which follows quite naturally upon routine." For the prayer of the heart, he says, "I await God's time." After many unsuccessful attempts to find work and a place to stay, he decides to go to the tomb of St. Innocent of Irkutsk in Siberia.

My idea was that in the forests and steppes of Siberia I should travel in greater silence and therefore in a way that was better for prayer and reading. And this journey I undertook, all the while saying my oral Prayer without stopping.

It is on this journey that the pilgrim experiences the prayer of the heart for the first time. In very lively, simple and direct words he tells us how it came about and how it led him into the most intimate relationship with Jesus.

After no great lapse of time I had the feeling that the Prayer had, so to speak, by its own action passed from my lips to my heart. That is to say, it seemed as though my heart in its ordinary beating began to say the words of the Prayer within at each beat. ...I gave up saying the Prayer with my lips. I simply listened carefully to what my heart was saying. It seemed as though my eyes looked right down into it; ... Then I felt something like a pain in my heart, and in my thoughts so great a love for Jesus Christ that I pictured myself, if only I could see Him, throwing myself at His feet and not letting them go from my embrace, kissing them tenderly, and thanking Him with tears for having of His love and grace allowed me to find so great a consolation in His Name, me, His unworthy and sinful creature! Further there came into my heart a gracious warmth which spread through my whole breast.

The prayer of the heart gives the pilgrim an immense joy and an unspeakable experience of God's presence. Wherever he goes and with whomever he speaks from here on, he cannot resist speaking about God who dwells in him. Although he never tries to convert people or change their behavior but always looks for silence and solitude, he nevertheless finds that the people he meets respond deeply to him and his words and rediscover God in their own lives. Thus, the pilgrim, who by his confession of sin and unceasing supplication for mercy, recognizes his distance from God, finds himself traveling through the world in his most intimate company and inviting others to share it.

The prayer of the heart can be a special guide to the present-day Christian searching for his own personal way to an intimate relationship with God. More than ever we feel like wandering strangers in a fast-changing world. But we do not want to escape this world. Instead, we want to be fully part of it without drowning in its stormy waters. We want to be alert and receptive to all that happens around us without being paralyzed by inner fragmentation. We want to travel with open eyes through this valley of tears without losing contact with him who calls us to new land. We want to respond with compassion to all those whom we meet on our way and ask a hospitable place to stay while remaining solidly rooted in the intimate love of our God.

Suggestions

1. Read and reflect on Matthew 13: 18-23, Philippians 4:6-7

2. Pray regularly the “Jesus Prayer.” Learn to call upon Him often. Quietly say, “Christ with me”. Repeat this many times in the day. Know that you are not making Him come, He is already there. You are seeking to be more aware of Him.
3. Learn to see Christ in others. Remind yourself that he is to be found in friend and stranger. You are on a voyage of discovery. Before each meeting with people, each encounter, whilst traveling on the bus or train, pray that He may reveal Himself to you.

Day 7: A Liturgy for Pilgrimage

Aidan: in the power of the Spirit

From Celtic Night Prayer, The Northumbria Community Trust, Marshall Pickering, 1996, pp. 32-34

A Call to Mission: to be used on pilgrimage, for sending out anyone going on mission, or by any mission team while they are away.

*(All who wish may read in turn. *Indicates a change of reader. With a large group, split into two halves and read alternately. All say together sections in bold type.)*

*Then I heard a voice in heaven saying, Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?
Then said I, Here am I. Send me.

*I will go, Lord, if You lead me: I will hold Your people in my heart.

*Deeper in my heart I will hear Your call. I will cry for the desert until my eyes run with tears because people do not obey Your laws.

*If I open my eyes to the world around me, if I open my heart to the people that surround me, then I feel pain and brokenness, I see suffering and injustice.

*Lord, see what evil the prince of this world is devising, Let the wind of Your Spirit blow and reverse the works of darkness and Your fire will cover the earth.

**Deliver us, Lord, from every evil
and grant us peace in our day.
In your mercy, Lord, keep us free from sin,
and protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope
for the coming of our saviour, Jesus Christ.
Let your Kingdom come, Lord, in me.**

**I pray the protection of Christ to clothe me,
Christ to enfold me,
to surround me and guard me
this day and every day,
surrounding me and my companions,
enfolding me and every friend.**

*We pray for ourselves, for the gift of friendship - and of faithfulness, and that we would be freed - from selfishness.

**We will journey with the kindhearted Saviour.
If we have fed the hungry from our own table
God will feed us with all good gifts.**

*We will keep before us the deepening and strengthening of our companions' faith, assisting each other in meditation and prayer.

*May we protect each other's times for silence. Give us the courage to say:

**Leave me alone with God as much as may be.
As the tide draws the waters
close in upon the shore
make me an island, set apart,**

**alone with you, God,
holy to you.**

**Then with the turning of the tide
prepare me to carry your presence
to die busy world beyond,
the world that rushes in on me
till the waters come again
and fold me back to you.**

Pause for reflection

*Lord, give us the desire to love goodness, to passionately love goodness, teach us moderation in all things. Teach us to love wisdom, and to greatly love Your law.

*So often we hold too lightly to our belief. May we plant the faith patiently, calmly and untiringly in the good ground of hungry hearts.

**God and the angels guard us!
May he bring us home rejoicing!**

Suggestions

1. You may like to sing the following and / or reflect on Isaiah 6:1-8

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my peoples pain.
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.

I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.

I will speak my word to them,
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

(Whom Shall I Send? Daniel L. Schutte, SJ (based on Isaiah 6:8)

- Perhaps you can re-write parts of the liturgy to give it an Australian emphasis or to make it connect more closely with our pilgrimage.
- Are you able to respond to the invitation to establish a small form of communication and relationship building between us? Are you able to take on of your first steps of the pilgrimage in self-disclosure? Are you able to take a small step in vulnerability? Or an important step in building community? Please send your comments and reflections.