

THE WELLSRING COMMUNITY INC

PILGRIMAGE 2003



THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

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PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

And so we come to the last instalment in our pilgrimage preparation.

I appreciated the help of Marilyn van Winsen and Bill Howarth as I prepared this instalment.

Instalment 6:
June/July Great pilgrims and great pilgrimages.

If you have access to the Internet, the following sites may be of interest. They cover pilgrimage sites beyond the scope of this instalment and in some cases have pictures

<http://www.request.org.uk/main/dowhat/pilgrimage/places/places01.htm>

<http://re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk/re/religion/christianity/churches/centres.html>



I am looking forward very much to meeting those who are going on the pilgrimage to Alice Springs and Uluru in a few weeks time. I look forward to catching up with others who have received this material but are unable to join us in the Centre.

Please bring these booklets with you on the pilgrimage. We may use them in some of our worship or reflection times.

I have come across some interesting novels lately that connect in some ways with the interests of the Wellspring Community. They are not great works of art but they are good yarns and they seem to be factually correct. You might like to check out:

The Wanderers Series by Caiseal Mor: three books entitled *The Circle and the Cross*; *The Song of the Earth*; and *The Water of Life*.

The Sister Fidelma series by Peter Tremayne. There are at least eight books in this series.

Salem-al-salakim--Peace

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Day 1: Pilgrim's Progress

John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (The Bunyan Press: Harpenden, UK, 1993), pp. 68-72.

Faithful, as he chanced to look on one side, saw a man whose name was *Talkative*, walking at a distance besides them (for in this place there was room enough for them all to walk.) He was a tall man, and something more comely at a distance, than at hand: To this man *Faithful* addressed himself in this manner.

Faith. Friend, Whither away? are you going to the Heavenly Country?

Talk. I *am* going to that same Place.

Faith. That is well; then I hope we may have your good company?

Talk. With a very good will will I be your Companion.

Faith. Come on then, and let us go together, and let us spend our time in discoursing of things that are profitable.

Talk. To talk of things that are good, to me is very acceptable, with you, or with any other; and I am glad that I have met with those that incline to so good a work: For to speak the truth, there are but few that care thus to spend their time (as they are in their Travels) but choose much rather to be speaking of things to no profit; and this hath been a Trouble to me.

Faith. That is indeed a thing to be lamented; for what thing so worthy of the use of the tongue and mouth of men on Earth, as are the things of the God of Heaven?

Talk. I like you wonderful well; for your sayings are full of conviction; and I will add, What thing is so pleasant, and what so profitable, as to talk of the Things of God? What things so pleasant? (that is, if a man hath any delight in things that are wonderful) for instance: If a man doth delight to talk of the History, or the Mystery of things; or if a man doth love to talk of Miracles, Wonders, or Signs, where shall he find things recorded so delightful, and so sweetly penned, as in the Holy Scripture?

Faith. That's true; but to be profited by such things in our talk, should be that which we design.

Talk. That is it that I said; for to talk of such things is most profitable; for by so doing, a man may get Knowledge of many things; as of the vanity of Earthly things, and the benefit of things Above: (Thus in general) but more particularly; by this a man may learn the necessity of the New Birth; the insufficiency of our Works; the need of Christ's righteousness, &c. Besides, by this a man may learn what it is to repent, to believe, to pray, to suffer, or the like: By this also, a Man may learn what are the great Promises and consolations of the Gospel, to his own comfort. Farther, by this a Man may learn to refute false opinions, to vindicate the Truth, and also to instruct the Ignorant.

Faith. All this is true, and glad am I to hear these things from you.

Talk. Alas! the want of this is the cause that so few understand the need of Faith, and the necessity of a work of Grace in their soul, in order to Eternal Life; but ignorantly live in the works of the Law, by which a man can by no means obtain the Kingdom of Heaven.

Faith. But, by your leave, Heavenly knowledge of these is the Gift of God; no man attaineth to them by human industry, or only by the talk of them.

Talk. All this I know very well. For a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from Heaven; all is of Grace, not of works: I could give you an hundred Scriptures for the confirmation of this.

Faith. Well then, said *Faithful*, what is that one thing that we shall at this time found our discourse upon?

Talk. What you will: I will talk of things Heavenly, or things Earthly; things Moral, or things Evangelical; things Sacred, or things Prophane; things past, or things to come; things foreign, or things at home; things more essential, or things circumstantial; provided that all be done to our Profit.

Faith. Now did *Faithful* begin to wonder; and stepping to *Christian*, (for he walked all this while by himself) he said to him, (but softly,) What a brave Companion have we got? Surely this man will make a very excellent Pilgrim.

Chr. At this *Christian* modestly smiled, and said, This man, with whom you are so taken, will beguile, with this Tongue of his, twenty of them that know him not.

Faith. Do you know him then?

Chr. Know him! Yes, better than he knows himself.

Faith. Pray what is he?

Chr. His name is *Talkative*; he dwelleth in our town; I wonder that you should be a stranger to him, only I consider that our Town is large.

Faith. Whose son is he? And whereabout doth he dwell?

Chr. He is the son of one *Say-well*, he dwelt in *Prating-Row*, and he is known of all that are acquainted with him, by the name of *Talkative* in *Prating-Row*; and notwithstanding his fine tongue, he is but a sorry fellow.

Faith. Well, he seems to be a very pretty man.

Chr. That is, to them that have not a thorough acquaintance with him; for he is best abroad, near home he is ugly enough: Your saying that he is a *pretty man*, brings to my mind what I have observed in the work of the Painter, whose pictures shew best at a distance; but very near, more displeasing.

Faith. But I am ready to think you do but *jest*, because you *smiled*.

Chr. God forbid that I should *jest*, (though I smiled) in this matter, or that I should accuse any falsely; I will give you a further discovery of him: This man is for any company, and for any *talk*; as he *talketh now* with you, so will he talk when he is on the *ale-bench*: And the more Drink he hath in his crown, the more of these things he hath in his mouth: Religion hath no place in his heart, or house, or conversation; all he hath lieth in his *tongue*, and his religion is to make a noise therewith.

Faith. Say you so! then am I in this man greatly deceived.

Chr. Deceived! you may be sure of it: Remember the proverb, *They say, and do not; but the Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power*. He talketh of Prayer, of Repentance, of Faith, and of the New Birth; but he knows but only to *talk* of them. I have been in his Family, and have observed him both at home and abroad; and I know what I say of him is the truth. His house is as empty of religion, as the white of an egg is of savour. There is there neither Prayer, nor sign of Repentance for Sin: Yea, the brute in his kind, serves God far better than he. He is the very stain, reproach, and shame of Religion to all that know him; it can hardly have a good word in all that end of the Town where he dwells, through him. Thus, say the common people that know him, *A Saint abroad, and a Devil at home*. His poor family finds it so, he is such a churl; such a railer at, and so unreasonable with his servants, that they neither know how to do for, or speak to him. . . .

Besides, he brings up his sons to follow his steps; and if he findeth in any of them *a foolish Timorousness*, (for so he calls the first appearance of a tender conscience) he calls them Fools and block-heads; and by no means will employ them in much, or speak to their commendations before others. For my part, I am of opinion, that he has, by his wicked Life, caused many to stumble and fall; and will be, if God prevent not, the ruin of many more.

Faith. Well, my brother, I am bound to believe you; not only because you say you know him, but also because, like a Christian, you make your reports of men. For I cannot think that you speak these things of Ill-will, but because it is even so as you say. . . . Well, I see that *saying* and *doing* are two things, and hereafter I shall better observe this distinction.

Suggestions

1. Reflect on James 1: 19-27 or on Wisdom 51:13-15, 20-21
2. Meditate on this thought by German theologian Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendell: "Eternal Life begins here in us with our bodies." (Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life* (Scribner: New York, 1996), p. 415)
3. Write blessings for your tongue, your mind, and your hands.
4. On day 1, monitor your use of the tongue. On day 2, monitor your thoughts. On day 3, monitor your hands. On day 4, monitor the number of times you are prompted to do something but don't—what stopped you?

Day 2: A Pilgrimage to Lourdes

Marylin van Winsen, *A Pilgrimage to Lourdes*.

In 1960, during my nursing training, I made a 9-day pilgrimage to Lourdes.

This is the place where in 1858 the Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, appeared several times in the grotto of Massabielle to a 14 year old girl: Bernadette Soubirous. Mary urged her to proclaim the message of repentance and acknowledgement of her Son as the Saviour of the world. She encouraged the simple repetitive prayer of the rosary, which includes meditation on the key events in the life of Christ. On Mary's instruction Bernadette dug in the ground of the grotto. A spring bubbled up. Its water has healing properties. The pilgrims are to drink the water and bathe in it to be purified.

The 27-hour journey from The Hague, Holland to Southern France was made by train. The train was especially equipped with the help of the Red Cross to accommodate the sick, adults and children, many bedridden. The corps of volunteers included a few priests and doctors, nursing staff and stretcher bearers. The spiritual director was the much-loved bishop Willem Bekkers, who spent most of the journey conversing with the pilgrims and leading in prayer at specific times.

In my eagerness to serve, I had said "yes" to volunteering without giving much thought to the challenges and discomforts, for patients as well as staff, nursing in strange circumstances with limited means entailed. Ever tried to toilet patients in a moving train!

The atmosphere on the journey down was a mixture of hopeful expectation and anxiety over the unfamiliarity of care, companions and food. With humour and hankies, we tried to soothe the people (tissues had not been invented yet!). It was very uplifting when about an hour before arrival the Pyrenees came into view and then Lourdes itself with the famous church on the hill. The patients were transferred to enormously long halls with rows of beds (I can still remember the yellow bed sheets}. We managed to settle the patients saying lots of "Hail Mary's."

The next 6 days are now for me a blur of activity, being with "our sick". There were several very large groups of pilgrims from Italy, Spain, France, and Ireland. People's praying and singing was heard in many different languages, but as if with one voice, pleading to God through the intercession of Mother Mary. Only late at night, just before we tumbled into our beds, dog tired, we had some quiet moments at the grotto. This carried us to do the work as required. It was a blessing that nuns did the night shift in the hospital.

One afternoon the healthy pilgrims, who had travelled in a separate train, took over from us to allow the volunteers an outing high in the mountains, where the Gave River, which feeds the spring, originates. We even played in the snow! In the extraordinary beauty of nature, the many wild flowers, I experienced God's presence as lively as in the involvement with the sick people.

Did any miracles happen? Yes, the difference between the journey to and from was remarkable: the people were so peaceful and contented on the home route, the volunteers could almost have a sleep themselves!

For those with eyes to see there are many miracles of Lourdes, beyond the few officially declared ones: courage, expressions of hope, faith, love, endurance in suffering, tolerance, patience, flexibility, surrender.

And "yes": the experience of being all children of the one Father, being given the same Mother and mediator: Mary.

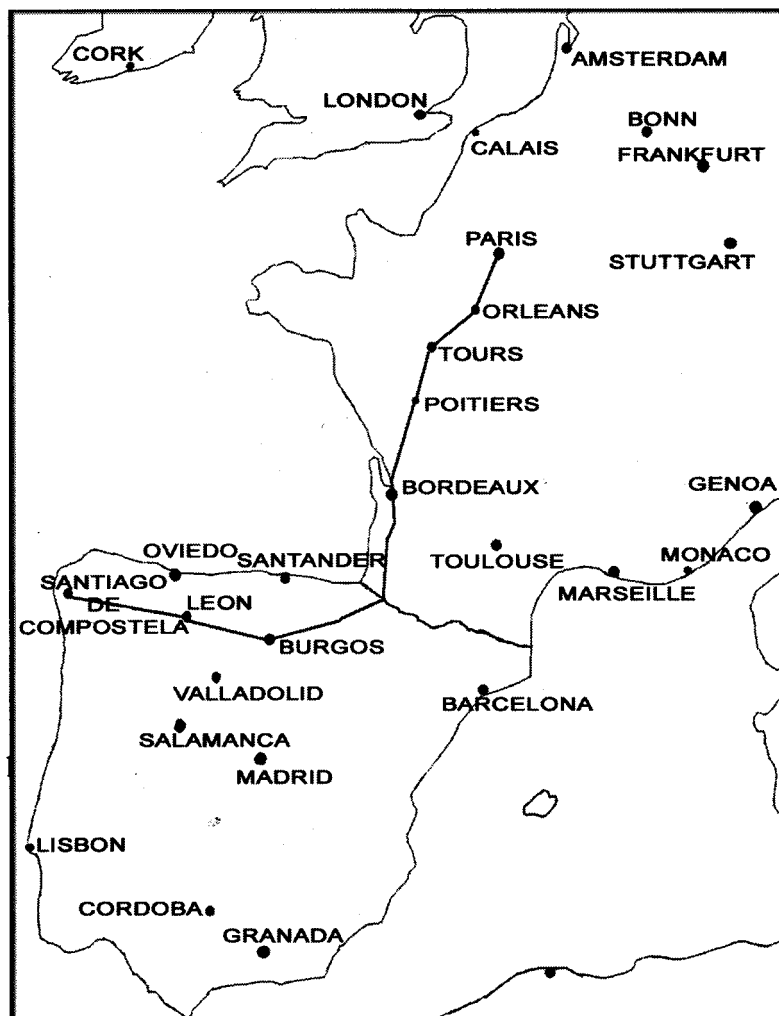
Yes, because I met my husband-to-be on this pilgrimage and because Mary is still for me the most important model of a Christ-centred life.

Suggestions.

1. Reflect on Healing on the Way Luke 17:11-19
2. Try the 6Ps on The Land of Promise Deuteronomy 8: 6-10
3. Examine your longings in the light of The Pilgrim's Longing Isaiah 26: 7-9

Day 3: Santiago de Compostela

Mary E Wilkie, *Walking to Santiago* (Armidale: Cranleigh House, 2001), pp. 11-13, 99



In 1998, when I was fifty-nine, I walked from Paris to Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain. This was a pilgrimage journey of close to eighteen hundred kilometres and it took me three and a half months.

I do not remember exactly when I first heard of this famous pilgrimage route. It could have been some twelve or fifteen years earlier, but I do remember the circumstances. I had been browsing in the university library in Armidale when I came across an article that contained a sentence that went something like this:

"On the feast of St James pilgrims meet at St James in Paris and walk to Santiago de Compostela."

I do not remember what else it said, but it gave me the impression that people just gathered there spontaneously and set off together on the long journey, lodging in monasteries and religious houses along the way. I have been unable to trace that source again; but the brief sentence somehow took root in my mind and I was never able to forget it. There was something appealing about such a walk and I wondered if people still made this pilgrimage. I did not know if the article I had looked at so casually referred to an historic practice or a contemporary one.

It was relatively easy to find out about the medieval pilgrimage to the alleged burial place of the apostle St James in the province of Galicia, in Spain. Santiago de Compostela had been the third most popular Christian pilgrimage site after Rome and Jerusalem, and at its height drew hundreds of thousands of pilgrims in a single year. Kings, queens, bishops, lords and common people went there in droves. Historical accounts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries make such frequent mention of people undertaking this pilgrimage, that it suggests it was not an uncommon experience. The pilgrimage combined religious and devotional inclinations with a desire for travel and adventure. Even though pilgrims often travelled separately or in small groups, their very numbers would have made it one of the earliest forms of mass travel.

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Pilgrims travelled to Compostela to venerate the relics of the apostle St James. His name translates into Spanish as Sant' Yago, or Santiago. He was the brother of St John the Evangelist and a son of Zebedee. He is mentioned many times in the Gospels as the disciple who, together with Peter and John, witnessed the Transfiguration of Jesus and accompanied Jesus to the Mount of Olives prior to the crucifixion. James is also credited with an epistle.

After the death of Jesus the apostles went out preaching the word and legend has it that James went to Spain. He was not very successful in his mission there and eventually returned to Jerusalem where he met his death. He has the distinction of being the first apostle to be martyred. He was beheaded, and since Herod refused to let him be buried, two of his disciples took his remains back to Spain.

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It was in the ninth century that a holy hermit called Pelayo saw a strange and miraculous light like a star coming from the ground. Investigation showed the site to be a tomb and human bones were uncovered which were recognised as the remains of St James. The site became a place of pilgrimage almost immediately. It was called Compostela. Some say this means 'field of the star' *campo stellae*, others say the name derives from *compostum*, meaning 'burial place'. A third interpretation is that Compostela is a contraction from Italian *Giacomo Apostolo*, 'James the Apostle'.

The ninth century was a propitious time for discovering the remains of an apostle. Spain was largely under Moorish domination but the reconquest which would continue for another six hundred years was already under way. St James was adopted as the patron saint of Spain and he served the cause of Christian Spain well. He appeared in battle on a white charger slaying Moors. Statues often depict him mounted on a white horse, brandishing his sword. This representation is known as 'St James the Moor Slayer', or in Spanish, *Santiago Matamoros*.

The scallop shell was adopted as the sign of the Santiago pilgrimage. Its origin is found in a story of a bridal party who were sailing the Galician coast when their boat capsized. On invoking the name of St James the party were saved and the bridegroom's horse emerged from the sea covered in scallop shells.

....

The pilgrimage was very physical in that I thought of warmth and comfort, fatigue, rest, food, and baths. It was spiritual in so far as I thought of it as a journey with God. I felt He provided for me, with the rest breaks, unexpected occurrences, and support on the hard slog.

I wondered about Jesus. Suppose only He was God. Forget the Trinity for the moment. If Jesus alone was God what sort of picture of God did I have? I asked these questions as a sort of exercise. I thought that even with a trinitarian view, which proclaimed three co-equal persons, many of us tended to think of the Father as number one, with Jesus and the Holy Spirit next in line. If I could have asked Jesus a question it would have been, "Who are you?"

I sometimes thought I would welcome the Second Coming. I would have liked to see Jesus interviewed on television, asked about what he thought of the state of the world, asked about whether he thought

people understood what he had been trying to teach them. "What does your Divinity think of your Church?"

The aim of meditation is to clear the mind. This pilgrimage was a sort of emptying experience; I felt I was arriving, perhaps via thoughts on shower heads and sugar packaging, at 'no thing'.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Reflect on A Creed of a Travelling People Deuteronomy 26: 5-9
2. Are you Following the Way of Christ Luke 9: 57-62?
3. As you pass through the regions of Australia, how will you respond to a challenge like Paul's Acts 16:6-12?

Day 4: Little Walsingham

Chris Price, *Points from a Pilgrimage by St. Faith's Parish Church, Liverpool*, <http://www.walsinghamanglican.org.uk/pilgrimage/pc2.htm>

Twenty-nine of us crossing coast-to-coast by coach and car on the long haul to Little Walsingham. A warm and amazing place of hidden corners, pathways and passages, soaked in sanctity and pervaded by prayer.

48 hours of rich and varied experiences. Worship in forms familiar and strange. Fellowship in the refectory queue and around the bars of the welcoming village hostelrys.

A fascinating mixture of prayerful devotion and shared laughter, not all of it always entirely reverent. The mysteries of the rosary... for many a focus of prayer, for others, even by the end, about forty Hail Mary's too many. The intense and wondrous silence of the Holy House, bedecked with blue and gold and a myriad of burning lights, the most moving of backgrounds to a parish at worship and in intercessory prayer.

The mysterious Shrine Church shafts of light on fifteen chapel altars large and small secret vistas round every corner and archway. On many occasions, the awareness of others at prayer or in praise: voices murmuring and distant bells sounding.

A trip to two amazing, vast and beautiful Anglican churches in the middle of nowhere yet open and unattended, richly adorned and powerfully prayerful (they wouldn't last a week on Merseyside). The Stations of the Cross around the Shrine gardens ... parish parties wending their way beneath the trees and the singing birds, each group doing its own thing yet part of one another. A little gem of an Orthodox Church. St Seraphim and icons galore in, of all places, an old railway station.

A singularly moving and spectacular Procession of Our Lady around the dark grounds, by candle-light and to the enthusiastic accompaniment of a hymn with more verses (and certainly more Ave Maria's) than you could shake a stick at, and punctuated by dubious descants and just a little departure from devotion in places.

A visit to the Roman Catholic Shrine (the Slipper Chapel down the road), and moving words in their official handbook commending a visit to 'our' Shrine and 'our' Parish Church and asking for prayers for the Anglican Diocese and its priests and people how far and wonderfully we have come in recent years!

Conversations in corridors, coffee brewed in little rooms, bonding between people who may scarcely have spoken to one another before. No sense (at least not for long) of anything alien or frightening ... and no pressure to accept anything you weren't happy about, nor to feel left out if you chose to snooze or stroll rather than join in things.

A place where even the gardens smell of incense. Village streets dotted with black-garbed priests, like something from centuries past. Pilgrims young and old leafing through racks of prayer cards in the Shrine Shop weighing up icons ... settling for the least garish statuette.

Parish Mass in the Parish Church in the village, packed with pilgrims and locals a building gloriously light and airy, with acres of clear grass, after the intense and sometimes stifling weight of the shrine church. Strolling back after coffee at the back of that church through sunny, still streets lined with flint-set, pantiled-roofed cottages.

Drinks outside the Bull in God's providential lunchtime sunshine. The transporting experience of going down into the well in the shrine in a new baptism for the blessing of pure, cold water in the mouth, on the forehead and splashing over the hands.

And, on the road home abiding memories of:

Peace and a deep silence of prayer made simple and appealing.

Fellowship made stronger and laughter more ready than ever (where even the old jokes sounded new)

A place to which to bring doubts and scepticism, but where, even where those reservations remained, it did not matter.

A place where it seemed overwhelmingly and satisfyingly normal to be a Christian, an Anglican and to live a life founded in the sacraments and prayer where to believe and to practise the faith was simple and natural.

A place where the unlikely became possible, the flamboyant and even the absurd were at home with the beauty of the holiness and where we could all be ourselves for a spell a lovely place and a lovely time, together for a time out of time with our fellow Christians and, without a shadow of doubt, with our God.

The Story So Far

<http://www.walsinghamanglican.org.uk/the-story/index.htm>

Even in the eleventh century, when this story begins, the village of Little Walsingham was a thriving place, located mid-way between Norwich (then England's second city) and the wealthy town of King's Lynn.

Richeldis de Faverches was a Saxon noblewoman, married to the Lord of the Manor of Walsingham Parva. He died leaving her a young widow with a son, Geoffrey.

We know that Richeldis had a deep faith in God and devotion to Mary. We know too of her reputation for good works in care and generosity towards those around her.

At this time there was a great deal of interest in the Holy Land and people undertook long and often dangerous pilgrimages there. Christian armies were soon to be engaged in a number of Crusades to liberate the holy sites from Muslim control and it is believed that Geoffrey eventually joined one of those Crusades as an expression of his Christian faith.

For Richeldis, however, the life of prayer and good works was rewarded by a vision in the year 1061. In this vision she was taken by Mary to be shown the house in Nazareth where Gabriel had announced the news of the birth of Jesus. Mary asked Richeldis to build an exact replica of that house in Walsingham. This is how Walsingham became known as England's Nazareth.

The vision was repeated three times, according to legend, and retold through a fifteenth century ballad. The materials given by Richeldis were finally constructed miraculously one night into the Holy House, while she kept a vigil of prayer.

Although we cannot be certain that this story represents all the details of historical fact, we do know that in passing on his guardianship of the Holy House, Geoffrey de Faverches left instructions for the building of a Priory in Walsingham. The Priory passed into the care of Augustinian Canons somewhere between 1146 and 1174.

It was this Priory, housing the simple wooden structure Richeldis had been asked to build, which became the focus of pilgrimage to Walsingham. After nearly four hundred years, the 20th century saw the restoration of pilgrimage to Walsingham as a regular feature of Christian life in these islands, and indeed beyond.

In 1897, there was a Roman Catholic pilgrimage to the restored 14th century Slipper Chapel, now at the centre of the Roman Catholic National Shrine.

Fr Alfred Hope Patten, appointed as Vicar of Walsingham in 1921, ignited Anglican interest in the pre-Reformation pilgrimage. It was his idea to base a new statue of Our Lady of Walsingham on the image depicted on the seal of the medieval Priory.

In 1922, this statue was set up in the Parish Church of St. Mary, and regular pilgrimage devotion followed. From the first night that the statue was placed there, people gathered around it to pray, asking Mary to join her powerful prayer with theirs. This work of intercession continues to this day.

Throughout the 1920's, the trickle of pilgrims became a flood of large numbers, for whom eventually a Pilgrim Hospice was opened (a hospice is technically the name of a place of hospitality for pilgrims) and in 1931, a new Holy House encased in a small pilgrimage church was dedicated, and the statue translated there with great solemnity. In 1938 that church was enlarged to form the Anglican Shrine, more or less as we know it today.

SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions are from

http://www.americancatholic.org/messenger/Mar2001/links_for_learners.asp

1. Reflect on God's Sojourners and Pilgrims Hebrews 11: 8-16
2. If you live near the ocean or a large lake, enjoy a walk on the shore. Don't hesitate to go even in winter, when you can stroll alone. See the [July 2000 Links for Learners](http://www.americancatholic.org/messenger/Jul2000/links_for_learners.asp) http://www.americancatholic.org/messenger/Jul2000/links_for_learners.asp for tips on how to enjoy the beach.
3. Even in the middle of a busy work day, you can stop in front of your computer for 10 minutes of prayer at [Sacred Space](http://www.jesuit.ie/prayer). <http://www.jesuit.ie/prayer>
4. Read Isaiah 43:1-2, 4-6. Turn it into your prayer as one of God's pilgrim people.

Day 5: Whithorn

The Whithorn Trust, <http://www.whithorn.com/christianity.htm>

According to an unbroken tradition dating from the earliest times and confirmed in the writings of the Venerable Bede in the 8th century, a holy man named Nynia, born among the British people, introduced the Christian faith into a significant part of the land now known as Scotland long before the coming of Saint Columba.

The traditional story has always been that Ninian was the son of a Christian tribal chief whose home was somewhere in the Solway region, possibly even at Whithorn. Ninian was baptised as a Christian and, at the period when Rome was withdrawing from the lands of Britain, Ninian went to Rome to study his faith. If traditions are correctly dated, he was a contemporary of St. Jerome, translator of the Vulgate (Latin) Bible.

Having completed his studies, Ninian is said to have been consecrated by Pope Siricius as a missionary to the Picts in his own land. He made his way home via Tours in France where he was greatly influenced by St. Martin, the zealous and beloved bishop who was a missionary among the pagans of rural Gaul.

Welcomed home by his own people, Ninian began his mission among them by building the first-known stone sanctuary in the land, a place referred to as "the shining white house." He is said to have heard of the death of St. Martin in Tours at this time (397 A.D.) and thus dedicated his new church in honour of his mentor. Having eventually corrected the errors of doctrine and understanding among his people, Ninian then moved out from Whithorn to communicate the message of the Christian gospel in other parts of northern Britain.

There are stories relating to his encounters with hostile kings, of miracles (one of which resulted in the conversion of an enemy king into a supporter of his mission) and of the establishment of a Christian presence as far as the land stretched and beyond, to the northern islands. The stories speak of his work as having been done amongst the Picts dwelling on the south side of the mountains.

Ninian returned then to Galloway and established a famed school of learning at Candida Casa. It was here that another generation of Christian leaders was trained, among them the one who taught the famed St. Columba. Ninian is said to have died in 432 A.D. at his own Candida Casa and his grave became a shrine for pilgrims, a place of reported miracles.

The significant impact made by Bede's Bishop Nynia, now called Saint Ninian, is recognised in the many Scottish place names that contain a form of his name. Nin, Nine, Ninnie, Nan, Monin, Monan,

and even Innies refer to Ninian, and there are traditional local tales of Ninian's work in ancient times in virtually every area where these names are found.

It is contended by many that the Ninian sites were founded by his disciples, even centuries after his lifetime. The evidence thus far gathered by a visit to the sites is that they follow the line of Roman roads, all clearly in existence and yet abandoned by Rome before the traditional time of Ninian, and are in places where very early Celtic, British/Pictish settlements are known to have existed in those times.

The sites visited are mainly of three types:

- on promontories reaching into sea estuaries (at obvious crossing points) or in deep bends of navigable rivers.
- several miles inland from such waterside sites, usually surrounded within a hilly terrain (hidden), on a slightly raised mound, often almost encircled by a burn; some such sites have traditional connotations of being honoured for 'refuge', some even still marked by refuge crosses.
- caves, gullies, or other such hidden away places suggesting retreat from society for spiritual solitude.

Some of areas have all three sites; some have one or two only identifiable by their "Ninian" place names, but most sites discovered fall within this pattern of three.

Having the three types of sites where the name of Ninian is commemorated all through the land, it may be noted that the same three types of sites have always been venerated as Ninian sites in the Whithorn area: the Isle of Whithorn; the sheltered priory at Whithorn; St. Ninian's Cave at Physgill glen.

A further feature of the sites is that even the obviously medieval dedications to St. Ninian, in or near great cathedral churches of that later period, are found to be almost entirely in the same areas as the place names that appear to represent a much earlier Ninian foundation.

Suggestions

1. As you ponder the journeys of Ninian think of the journeys of Jesus eg John 4:3-9. Reflect on your journey with Jesus.
2. Where are we going? Reflect on Christ the Way of Life John 14:4-7

Day 6: An Irish Pilgrimage.

Susan Hines-Brigger, *An Irish Journey Into Celtic Spirituality*,
<http://www.americancatholic.org/messenger/Mar2001/feature1.asp>

Last June, I had the opportunity to accompany 29 fellow pilgrims on a 12-day journey to discover the history and spirituality of Ireland. As we embarked on our pilgrimage on a typically Irish "soft day," complete with misty rain and moderate temperatures, we connected with the Celtic theme of pilgrimage. We too were pilgrims on a faith journey. Pilgrimage was a very important aspect of Celtic spirituality, notes Sister John Miriam, adding that "pilgrimage is still very much alive in Ireland."

"Pilgrimage is always a search for God and God's goodness," she says. "True pilgrimage has to do with a change of heart. The outward journey serves to frame an inner journey: a journey of repentance and rebirth; a journey which seeks a deeper faith, greater holiness; a journey in search of God."

Celtic men and women soon took up the practice of pilgrimage as a means of discovering their own path to God. Along their way, pilgrims would leave tangible signs of their journey such as pilgrims' stones, which are rudely fashioned crosses, or small mounds of stones called cairns. The stones represented either a prayer or the completion of the pilgrimage.

Round towers, found throughout Ireland, also played a vital role in pilgrimages. The towers, which are believed to have served a number of purposes including serving as bell towers and as places of refuge during attacks, can be seen for miles. They would have provided pilgrims with direction and inspiration to complete their journey.

How does this Celtic notion of pilgrimage translate in 21st-century terms? Grace Szubski, a fellow pilgrimage member and lawyer from Brecksville, Ohio, notes that "the Celtic pilgrims were searching for a deeper faith and an inner peace with God. All these centuries later, we, too, are on that same

quest. Retreats, religious shrines and World Youth Days are just some examples of our spiritual journey with God in the 21st century.”

Finding God in the 'Thin Places'

Traveling through Ireland, as the ancient pilgrims would have, offers an excellent opportunity to experience one of the other major themes of Celtic spirituality: the immanent presence of God, which means that God is everywhere.

For Celtic Christians, God was a key part of all things natural and beautiful. Whereas the ancient Celts worshiped pagan gods for nearly every natural setting, Celtic Christians praised God’s design and creation of all things natural. “The hills, the sky, the sea, the forests were not God, but their spiritual qualities revealed God and were connected to God,” Sister John Miriam explains.

Places where people feel most strongly connected with God’s presence are referred to as “thin places.” It is in these places where the seen and unseen worlds are most closely connected and inhabitants of both worlds can momentarily touch the other. “For us, then, it is a place where it is possible to touch and be touched by God, as well as the angels, saints and those who have died,” according to Sister John Miriam.

For anyone looking around the Irish landscape, locating a thin place in nature seems rather simple. The abundance of beauty makes it easy to recognize God’s imprint and presence. The ruggedness of the Cliffs of Moher, waves of purple rhododendron, vast fields of green and forest-like settings throughout Ireland all seem to convey the idea that God is near at hand.

One example of a human-constructed thin place is Newgrange, an ancient passage tomb located in the Boyne Valley. Knowth and Dowth, two smaller burial tombs, are also located in this area but are not open to visitors.

These burial tombs, which predate Stonehenge and the pyramids, were constructed so that every year on December 21—the shortest day of the year—light would enter a small opening above the entrance and illuminate the passageway and center room of the burial tomb for 17 minutes. The appearance of light in the chamber during the winter months would reaffirm for the Celts that summer would again come, just as there would be life after death. Today, there is a 10-year waiting list to witness on December 21 this spectacular feat of engineering and faith.

Experiencing God in Community

Solitary hermits developed many of these monastic communities. Others were then attracted to the communities by the monks’ holiness and the location of the monastic community, leading to the eventual growth of rather large monastic cities encompassing a variety of people seeking to express their faith through their own lives and work. From the sixth to the 12th century, these monastic cities flourished with religious and laity living and worshipping together.

During our pilgrimage we visited three of Ireland’s most famous monastic communities: Glendalough, Monasterboice and Clonmacnoise.

Monasterboice was founded in the sixth century by St. Buite. The monastery is most recognized for its exquisite High Crosses, especially Mueirdach’s Cross, which is the tallest High Cross in Ireland.

Glendalough, which means “The Valley of the Two Lakes,” was founded in the sixth century by St. Kevin. Following the establishment of the monastic city, St. Kevin retreated to a cave—known as St. Kevin’s Bed—by the upper lake where, according to legend, he lived to be 106. According to another legend, a woman appeared in St. Kevin’s cave to seduce him; he flung her over the cliff and into the lake below.

Clonmacnoise was a major center of religion, learning, trade, craftsmanship and political influence. It was founded around 548 A.D. by St. Ciarán and, because of its large lay population, actually resembled a town more than a monastery. It is also home to one of Ireland’s finest surviving High Crosses, the “Cross of the Scriptures.” The panels of the “Cross of the Scriptures” depict Christ’s passion, death and resurrection, with the center of the cross showing the risen Christ.

Artistic and Symbolic Expressions of Faith

Celtic design is rather easily identified. Its intricacies and symbolism are an important expression of the faith and beliefs of the Celtic Christians. These designs can be seen in a broad range throughout Ireland, from the highly intricate artwork in the ninth-century Book of Kells to the craftsmanship of the

High Crosses. The characteristic interweaving patterns and designs commonly found in Celtic artwork represent that “all things relate” and “all things are holy.”

Perhaps the most recognizable symbols of Celtic spirituality are Ireland’s more than 100 High Crosses. These imposing crosses stand anywhere from 10 to 15 feet tall, with each element of the cross serving as a symbol. For instance, the circle within the crossbar that is so identifiable with Celtic crosses is often interpreted as representing God’s continuing connection with life and earth.

The crosses evolved over the years from being primarily design-oriented in the seventh and eighth centuries to being more scriptural later. These scriptural crosses, often referred to as “Sermons in Stone,” helped illustrate important Christian concepts for preliterate Celts.

SUGGESTIONS

Some of the following suggestions are from

http://www.americancatholic.org/messenger/Mar2001/links_for_learners.asp

1. Read Luke 15: 18-20 and reflect on your journey of penitence.
2. Simply following the Stations of the Cross in your parish church may remind you of your own path to the Father. If you're a teacher or parent, bring your children along and explain what the Stations of the Cross mean.
3. Locate a "thin place" where the natural and the supernatural connect for you. Go there, if only in your imagination. Open your heart to experience the moment.
4. For some who are homebound, the Internet can offer "thin places" where we can feel side by side both our world and God's presence. Try the [NASA](http://space.jpl.nasa.gov/) Web site <http://space.jpl.nasa.gov/> for an awe-inspiring picture of your favourite planet. Or see the [Webshots.com](http://www.webshots.com/) site <http://www.webshots.com/> for thousands of photographs of mountains and beaches, fish and forest creatures, lighthouses and the open sea. The pictures are downloadable as screen savers for daily inspiration.

Day 7: A Form of Prayer for Welcoming and Commissioning of Pilgrims

Christopher Irvine, *The Pilgrims' Manual: A Publication from The Iona Community and The Pilgrims' Way*, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications), pp. 5-13.

When all the pilgrims have gathered together they are formally welcomed, presented with individual copies of the gospel, and commissioned to take their part in the mission of God, to step out in faith, bearing the good news of Christ and bringing his word of peace to all they meet along the pilgrims' way.

Welcome

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all!

All: **And also with you.**

Dear friends in Christ, God our Creator is ever reaching out in love to his world, He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to proclaim in word and deed the coming of God's kingdom; the glorious reign of God in which human lives and communities are ordered by God's loving justice, healed, and given hope for the future.

In his ministry, Jesus gathered disciples and sent them to extend his welcome and his healing touch to outsiders.

After Christ's resurrection, when the disciples were together at prayer, God sent his Spirit, like the rush of a mighty wind, that they might be empowered to unite people of every language, culture and race in the word of the God of hope and peace.

Today, in and through that same Spirit, we too can be caught up in this movement of God. Christ gathers us, as he gathers people from every background, and in every time and place, to hear his word, and to be strengthened for the journey at his table. That word is to burn in our hearts and place a song on our lips. Our sharing in the breaking of bread is to help us recognise Christ as we continue life's journey, and the sharing of his cup helps us to share the joys and sorrows we meet along the way.

Today we have gathered in order that we might be sent out; to enter into the rhythm of God's mission, and to be caught up in God's loving outreach to our world. We have come together to catch the wind of the Spirit and to be led as pilgrims for Christ.

So, in silence let us pray for the stirring and strengthening Spirit of God.

Silence is kept

The Prayers

The following litany; or some other form of intercessory prayer shall be offered. The congregation's response, 'Lord, have mercy' may be said, or sung.

Leader: In peace, let us pray to the Lord, saying, 'Lord, have mercy.' That as we journey together we may discover our unity in Christ, recognise the diversity of our insights and gifts, and look forward to that day when the whole Church is united in the doing of God's will, let us pray to the Lord.

All: **Lord, have mercy**

That we may recognise and celebrate the grace of God in the places we go to and in the lives of those we meet there, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy

That we may take the Gospel of the Lord to heart, and speak the word of Christ to others, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy

That the peoples of these islands may know the healing touch of Christ, and seek to live peaceably and justly across the divides of race, class, and background, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy

That a greater sense of our calling to participate in the mission of God may stir throughout the worldwide Church, and that we might grow in our sense of sharing the life of Christ with Augustine, Columba, and Christians of every age and place, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy

To complete our prayer together, let us pray as our Saviour Christ has taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen. ,

We sit for the reading from Scripture

The Word

A reading from Luke chapter 10, verses 1-11

A space for silent reflection is kept after the reading and concludes with the following responsory:

Responsory:

Leader: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

All: **He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.**

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives;

The recovering of sight to the blind.

To set at liberty those who are oppressed;

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

*A small candlelight procession leads those bringing the copies of the gospels to the front of the church.
During the procession the following hymn is sung:*

Thou whose almighty Word
Chaos and darkness heard,
And took their flight;
Hear us, we humbly pray,
And where the gospel day
Sheds not its glorious ray
Let there be light.
Thou who didst come to bring
On thy redeeming wing
Healing and sight,
Health to the sick in mind,
Sight to the inly blind,
O now to all mankind
Let there be light.
Spirit of truth and love,

Life-giving, holy Dove,
Speed forth thy flight;
Move o'er the waters' face,
Bearing the lamp of grace,
And in earth's darkest place
Let there be light.
Blessed and holy Three,
Glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might,
Boundless as ocean's tide,
Rolling in fullest pride,
Through the world far and wide
Let there be light.

(Tune: Moscow. Words: John Marriott)

When the procession has reached the altar steps the following prayer is offered:

God of all wisdom and power, we thank you for the gift of your holy word.

May it be light to our path, a lamp to our feet, and lead us along the ways of righteousness, now and always. Amen.

The following acclamation, drawn from a Celtic prayer, is made as the copies of the gospel of Mark are handed over to be distributed to the pilgrims.

Minister: The Gospel of the God of Life, to guide and protect you.

All: **The Gospel of Beloved Christ; the holy Gospel of the Lord.**

An 'Alleluia' chant is sung during the distribution of the individual copies of the gospel to each pilgrim.

Afterwards the pilgrims are asked to hold high their copies of the Gospel.

The Blessing and Commissioning of the Pilgrims

We praise and bless you, God our Father, for sending to us your Son. He went about among us doing good. He travelled light with nowhere to lay his head. Resolutely he set his face to Jerusalem, and journeyed there to the centre of conflict compelled by your costly reconciling love. Bless, these your pilgrims, and guide their steps as they seek to walk by faith; strengthen them by your Spirit, today and until the time when they reach their place of resurrection. We ask this in the name of him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The hymn 'We have a Gospel to proclaim', (tune: Fulda), or, 'Forth in the peace of Christ we go.' (Tune: Deo Gratias) may be sung at this point.

The Dismissal:

Go in the light and peace of Christ! **Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia!**