



Buen Camino - a well-used greeting on the pilgrim way to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, North West Spain.

Pilgrimage is as old as humanity. People traditionally have journeyed to sacred places or shrines such as Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Mecca, Dharmasala and Santiago as part of their religious or spiritual practice.

People went on pilgrimage for many reasons. It may have been to encounter God more deeply and strengthen their faith or to seek a cure for illness for themselves or their family. They may also have wanted to give thanks for blessings or to ask forgiveness for something they had done wrong.

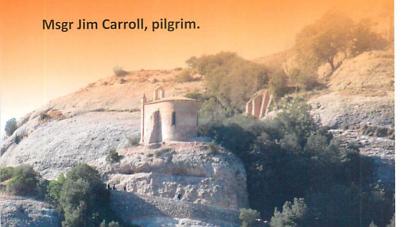
Whatever the reason for undertaking pilgrimage, there was a belief that the journey mirrored their own journey of life and that it would bring its own grace and perhaps even redemption.

In recent years Camino walking has become popular among young and more senior citizens from many parts of the world. Ireland has a long tradition of pilgrimage, from Lough Derg to Croagh Patrick to the ancient pathways to holy wells and sacred sites all over the island. Saturday April 19th 2014 saw the inaugural "Pilgrim Path's Day" when walkers were given the opportunity to follow the routes of ten ancient pilgrim paths, Ireland's own Camino.

This publication is a visual and narrative attempt to honour such pilgrimages in the hope that in visiting these sacred places we might rediscover the inner journey as a gift from God that centres us in faith, hope and love.

And remember: only in heaven will nilgrimage cease

Enjoy! Buen Camino!



PILGRIMS OF THE PAST

Journey of The Magi

by T. S. Eliot

'A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.'
And the camels galled, sore-footed,
refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.

Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill
beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped in away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves
over the lintel,

Over the lintel,

Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,

And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.

But there was no information, and so we continued

And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon

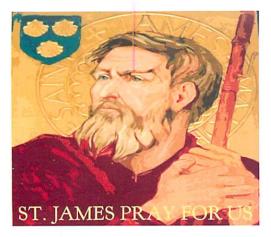
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember, And I would do it again, but set down this Set down this:

Were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had
seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different;

this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like
Death, our death.

We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.



TS Elliot's great poem is an imaginary account of the great trek undertaken by the three Eastern noblemen who came to Bethlehem in search of the new born Christ Child. It is a graphic reminder that in the past, pilgrimages were not undertaken lightly: people often made a will before setting off! Travel was difficult and often dangerous and all but the shortest journeys required preparation and money.

For Christians in medieval times, the idea of life as a daily pilgrimage ran through the whole of their spirituality. It gave shape and perspective to their experience and offered a long-term security which set them free to risk all for God in the present.

To be a "pilgrim" was to have dual citizenship, living in this world with all its cares and responsibilities but with an awareness that there is a deeper meaning to it all, that life itself is a daily 'pilgrimage', that the journeying, adventuring is never done and that the ultimate destination is the heart of God.

Just as people buy holiday souvenirs today, pilgrims of the past brought back mass-produced badges, such as the badge of St. James from Santiago de Compostela, containers of holy oil or holy water or even stones and earth from the holy places. These were believed to carry long-lasting blessings as well as providing proof that they had made the journey.

Medieval shrines in England were mostly destroyed at the Reformation but there are many historical maps and documents which show pilgrims requesting and receiving permission to travel and some personal accounts of journeys. Some Cathedrals e.g. Worcester, also have their own pilgrim burial places.

PILGRIMAGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY - Who goes on pilgrimage today?

It must be acknowledged that many people today do not have the material resources or the time to embark on a pilgrimage. While some pilgrimages can be completed in a matter of days, some take several weeks and require a certain amount of money to survive. It is therefore a privilege to be able to go on pilgrimage.

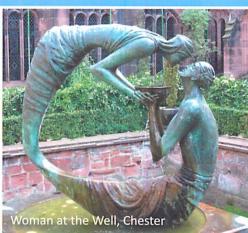
Pope Francis in his homily on the feast of the Holy Family 2015 referred to the image of two Biblical families on pilgrimage to the house of God. Elkanah and Hannah bring their son Samuel to the temple at Shiloh to consecrate him to the Lord. In the same way, Mary and Joseph with Jesus go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. Pope Francis focussed on the fact that the whole family went on pilgrimage and suggests that this is a lesson for modern families who could consider that all family life is a pilgrimage of sorts.

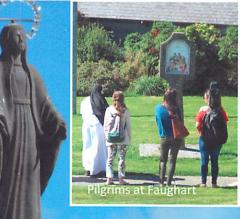
SOME PILGRIMAGE EXPERIENCES Walking the Talk

From the Ten Commandments to the Beatitudes, to the yellow arrows on the Camino, we rely on the wisdom and the footprints of the past.

With the belief that my own life is itself a pilgrimage of sorts, I have in recent years tried to honour the lives of those who have walked the sacred paths for centuries by undertaking several pilgrimages to places in Ireland, England and Europe including of searching for and visiting the ancient holy wells of these islands.







Bull Island, Dublin



EL CAMINO - is it just a long walk?

The Camino de Santiago now attracts over a quarter million walkers each year. A percentage of these consider themselves as tourists or hikers rather than pilgrims, seeing the Camino walk as merely a challenge or an adventure. Thousands, however undertake the long trek across Northern Spain in the spirit of pilgrimage, seeing it as time and space to stand back from modern living and explore their own lives and thoughts and perhaps even an opportunity to become closer to God.

Most travel by foot, some by bicycle, and a few travel as some of their medieval counterparts did, on horseback or by donkey.

The Pilgrim journey has the imprint of risk rather than

certainty. It is important to look out for the pilgrim signs, the yellow arrows and the symbol of the scallop shell - and trust that they point in the right direction!

Pilgrims on the Way of St. James walk for weeks or months to visit the city of Santiago de Compostela. Some Europeans begin their pilgrimage on foot from the very doorstep of their homes, just as their medieval counterparts did.

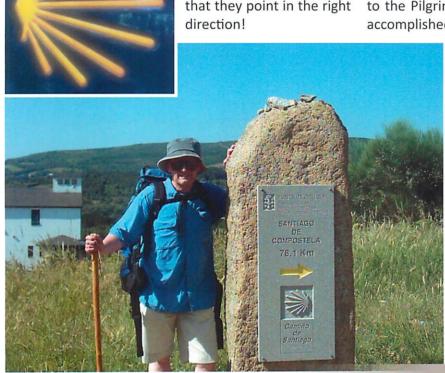
They follow many routes (any path to Santiago can be considered a pilgrim's path), but the most popular is Via Regia and its last part, the French Way (Camino Francés).

In Spain, France and Portugal, pilgrim's refugios or albergues, similar to hostels with beds in dormitories dot the common routes, providing overnight accommodation for pilgrims who hold a credencial, i.e. a pass which gives access to inexpensive, sometimes free, overnight accommodation along the trail. Also known as the "pilgrim's passport", the credencial is stamped with the official St. James stamp of each town or refugio at which the pilgrim has stayed. It provides pilgrims with a record of where they ate or slept, and serves as proof to the Pilgrim's Office in Santiago that the journey was accomplished according to an official route, and thus

that the pilgrim qualifies to receive a compostela (certificate of completion of the pilgrimage).

Staying at pilgrims' hostels, known as albergues, usually costs between 6 and 10 euros per night per bed, although a few hostels known as donativos operate on voluntary donations. Pilgrims are usually limited to one night's accommodation and are expected to leave by eight in the morning to continue their pilgrimage.

Hostels may be run by the local parish, the local council, private owners or pilgrims' associations.



PREPARING FOR PILGRIMAGE

Pilgrims setting off on a pilgrimage often start with a Pilgrim's Prayer, by lighting a candle or by sprinkling of holy water. Each of these are important Christian symbols.

There are of course other preparations to be made before a walking pilgrimage. When Jesus sent out his followers to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal, he advised them to take nothing for the journey (Luke 9;1-6). He seemed to suggest that all would be provided on the way, that it was time to trust and to risk all. However, the basic necessity of being physically fit to walk or cycle is important as are the practical issues of what to carry, of guide books, clothing etc. Of equal importance is the formation of a personal intention for the journey.



THE PILGRIM WAY

Across Northern Spain lies a pilgrim route from the French Pyrenees to Galicia and the Shrine of St James at Santiago de Compostela.

According to tradition, the body of the Apostle James, brother of John and son of Zebedee and Maria Salome, was brought to Galicia after he was martyred in Jerusalem in 44AD. His remains were re-discovered at Santiago in 813 and a Cathedral was built in his honour.

In the Middle Ages half-a-million pilgrims a year journeyed here from all over Europe. They often donned the pilgrim garb of cape, long staff and felt hat adorned with a scallop shell. The ancient pilgrim routes are still used by travellers today to one of Europe's greatest pilgrimage sites, the Shrine of St James at Santiago de Compostela.

I was privileged to travel the 500 miles one year with MS Ireland, the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland. We began at St Jean Pied de Port in the French Pyrenees and walked 10 stages of the Camino on the road to Santiago. There were 40 of us.

Training walks had been a good way to get to know our walking colleagues and we had met most of the 40 before we left Dublin Airport and flew to Bilbao. The group varied in age, fitness levels, experience and walks of life. Some had done the Camino many times before,

but we all knew it would be no pushover! So it proved – from thunder and lighting, hailstones and torrential rain in the Pyrenees to the dry land of the 'meseta' and on to the farmlands of Galicia there was something for everyone. Sometimes blisters and sometimes the aches of tired muscles. It's all in a days walk on the Camino.

But there was enjoyment too – the friendship in the group and the unexpected encounters with other pilgrims on the road. All bringing its own blessing.

To enter the Cathedral Square in Santiago dressed in our MSIrelandt-shirts was a special moment, followed by Mass in the Cathedral at the Shrine of St James. It's traditional to hug the Statue of St James on arrival. A wonderful moment. We shared a great sense of achievement in

walking the Camino. Thanks to all who said a prayer or sent an angel to help these pilgrims on the road.

St James of Santiagopray for us.









LIFE LESSONS FROM A CAMINO

Gratitude: For simple food, a hot shower and a clean bed at the end of a long day's trek. Also for the health and resources to be able to do it.

Simplicity: Possessions consist of raingear, a change of clothing, walking staff and drinking water, a credential and some money. More than this is unnecessary 'baggage'.

Patience: The journey is what is important. There is no need to rush, just keep moving forward at your own pace.

Hospitality: Pilgrims have traditionally been welcomed with openness and hospitality by locals. Sharing what we have with others is an important part of the pilgrim experience.

Acceptance: No-one manages to complete a Camino without some pain, whether physical or emotional or both. Accepting it without complaint and working through it is worth it.

Tranquillity: With growing crowds now doing Camino, distractions are many. It is important to seek inner peace.

AVILA, Home Of St. Teresa.

For pilgrims, the city of Ávila is important because of its association with the great mystic and reformer St. Teresa de Jesus. better known as St. Teresa of Ávila. Teresa was a 16th-century Carmelite nun who reformed her order, had many ecstatic visions, and wrote several books. She is the female patron saint of Spain and was the first woman to be named a Doctor of the Church. Ávila contains two main shrines honoring St. Teresa, along with a few more sites associated with the saint. The primary shrine is the

Convento de Santa Teresa, a convent which contains her relics, and the second is the Monasterio de la Encarnacion, where St. Teresa lived and where her cell can be visited.

Pope Francis wrote to the Bishop of Avila on the Opening of the Teresian Jubilee Year — "Along which paths does the Lord wish to lead us?"

1. I would like to recall four that do me much good: those of joy, of prayer, of fraternity and of time itself. This joy is a journey that must be followed throughout life. It is not instantaneous superficial, tumultuous. It is neither selfish nor self-reverential and involves

placing oneself at the service of others with unselfish love.

The Gospel is not a bag of lead which one drags arduously, but a font of joy which fills the heart with God and impels it to serve one's brothers and sisters.

2. Go forth along the path of prayer with determination, without stopping, until the end. In a society with so many idols, you witness that. "God alone suffices".

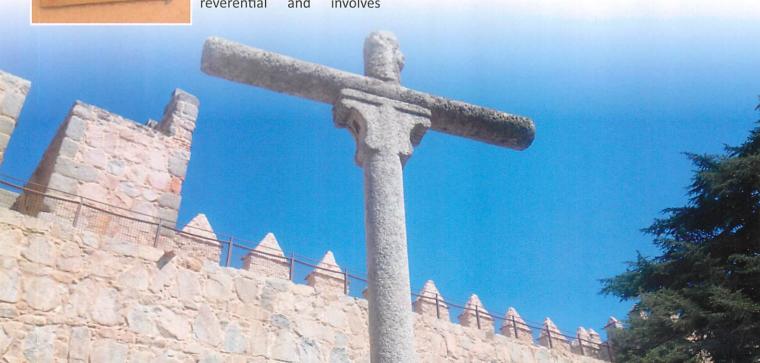
3. We cannot undertake this journey alone, but together. What a beautiful definition of fraternity in the Church: to journey together with Christ as brothers and sisters. Teresa of Avila does not recommend many things to us, only three: love for each other, detachment from everything, and true humility. In these times how I should like there to be more grateful Christian communities where one makes this journey.

4. Teresa tells us: pray more in order to truly understand what is happening around you, so as to act better. Prayer conquers pessimism and generates good initiatives. This requires work instead of emotions and love instead of dreams. If only everyone were infected by this holy haste to go out to journey along the paths of our times, with the Gospel in hand and the Spirit in the heart!

I say to all: "It is time to walk", to set out on the paths of joy, of prayer, of fraternity, of time lived as Grace. I ask you, please, to pray for me, for I need it.

Pope Francis





SLEMISH, CO. ANTRIM Slemish Mountain, Co. Antrim. August 2015

All of a sudden, it rose out of the flat fertile plain as we rounded a bend in the narrow country road, Sliabh Mish, the mountain of Patrick and Miolchu, his slavemaster. It reminded me of Tabor rising from the Galilean plain. From this distance it looked majestic but challenging. The sheer cliffs near the upper third seemed from this vantage to require the use of crampons and these pilgrims were not planning on crampons.

A pleasant late summer sun bathed the mountain as we set off. Slemish is not a high mountain at a mere 477 meters and the guide books suggest it can be climbed in about a half hour. We followed the stone steps up the gentle incline for some time in the company of 5 year old Noah and his mother who told us he wanted an "adventure". We left them behind as we trekked easily upwards until we reached the section of the hill where it was necessary to scramble across slippery rocks and steep grassy verges.

I felt gratitude for my trusty walking poles which levered me upwards and onwards but occasionally were useless when what was needed was a careful clump of strong heather for a cautious hoist. Was this the path that the son of Calpurnius trod two millennia ago to watch over the flocks of Miolchu?

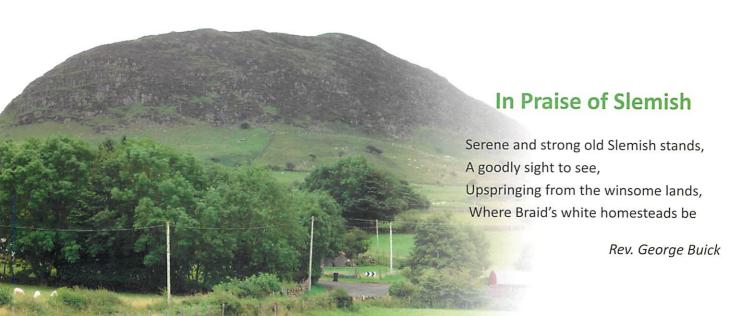
Looking back westwards we could see the broad expanse of fine Antrim farmland, dotted with homesteads as far as the eye could see. We marvelled at how steep the hill behind us was that we had just climbed and on reaching the summit we were grateful for a cooling breeze from the south west. After the congratulatory hugs and the obligatory photographic recording of the occasion, we took in the magnificence of the 360 degree panorama which must have nurtured Patrick spiritually if not physically.

And now it was time to wonder what was the safest and best way back down. The upward climb had been surprisingly short taking us just 30 minutes but the steepness and wetness of the last part caused some anxiety about the trek down. So it was decided like the wise men of yore to return by a different route.

We walked a short distance to the east until we found what appeared to be a well trodden path downwards. This too had its challenges, thick purple heather hiding treacherous holes underneath which could cause a twisted ankle or even more serious injury; sheer drops too steep for safe descent forcing us to alternative tracks no less dangerous zigzagging down slowly and carefully until at last we found ourselves off the steepest parts and on to a recognisable path back to the carpark and safety.

It is sometimes said that we climb mountains just because they are there or that we climb them not so the world can see us but that we can see the world. And indeed to arrive at the summit of a mountain however hard or easy the climb is to get a different perspective and not just physically. To reach the top of a mountain requires focus and vigilance and a certain innerness as well as physical fitness. If that mountain is also a sacred place it brings another dimension to the experience, perhaps an awareness of the spirit of the place and a deep gratitude for the beauty and wonder of our surroundings, for the clouds floating gently by or the mist shrouding the landscape sometimes closing in alarmingly. I love the clean clear air and the silent stillness often experienced in these high places and I always feel gratitude for being able to be there.

A Pilgrim

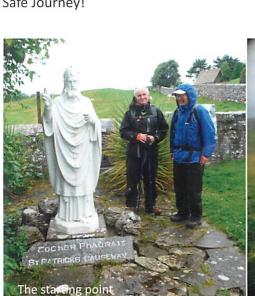


TOCHAR PHADRAIG, CO. MAYO.

Ireland's nearest answer to the Camino. Tochar Phadraig is the genuine pilgrim article and was once a pre-historic druidic pathway. Christianized by St. Patrick, it remains stubbornly untamed and much as it was for medieval pilgrims.

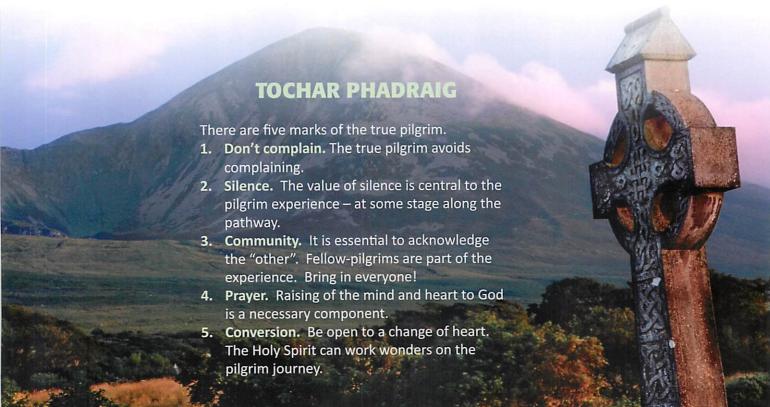
The pathway is at relatively low level, with some challenging underfoot conditions. Walkers need good footwear and adequate protective clothing. It begins at Ballintubber Abbey and finishes at Murrisk Carpark. You will probably summit Croagh Patrick en route but it is not essential to the tochar.

Safe Journey!









MY PORTUGUESE CAMINO

Friday 13th July was the day I set off on Camino with seven other pilgrims. This was to be my third year walking the Camino but my first on the Portuguese route. My previous two Caminos were from the beginning of the French route (Saint Jean Pied De Port) and the last 100kms section into Santiago de Compostela.

The Portuguese route was different in the sense that we met very few pilgrims, so there were long periods when two or three of us were walking together without meeting anyone. This meant we relied on each other for support and encouragement to keep going when the days were long. Being on pilgrimage also meant trusting God to look after us, as each of us had our own fears and concerns about completing the Camino.

My biggest concern was whether I would be able to carry my rucksack. What if I got blisters or if I became too ill to walk? I gradually had to learn to accept the challenges that the Camino threw at me. I began to look upon the Camino as an adventure into the unknown and to put my trust in God that I would complete it.

As a group we developed a ritual every morning of getting together after breakfast just before we started off on our walk by having a 'holy huddle'. We would gather in a circle just outside our refugio or hostel and ask our guardian angel to guide us. Each of us in turn would mention someone we knew back home who needed our prayers and we would carry them with us on our journey.

As the days went by we gradually settled into our own rhythm of walking. We could keep each other company - or if we wanted space to walk alone we did so. As we walked

along pilgrim paths I observed the beauty of the woodlands and forests we were going through, of quiet hamlets, through fields of maize and lush vineyards, busy farmlands, and medieval sites as we passed by. This is the beauty of the Camino: To walk in the same footsteps of pilgrims long ago.

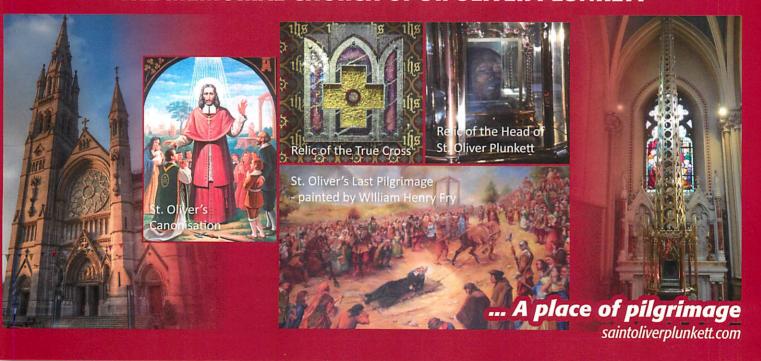
We had seven days walking the Camino and during that time we experienced the kindness of strangers many times. Such as when we got lost and had to ask for directions in "pigeon Spanish", or when we had to seek shelter in a private garage where a father and son took pity on us. There were some days which were extremely exhausting after walking through heavy rain and rough terrain and I wondered "how am I going to get up the next morning and walk another long day?"

But eventually on the seventh day after a particularly long walk we all made it into Santiago. It was truly an emotional moment when we eventually met up in front of the Cathedral to offer thanks to God for our safe journey and for the gift of pilgrimage - and the joy of companionship on the Camino.

- A Pilgrim



ST. PETER'S CHURCH DROGHEDA - THE MEMORIAL CHURCH OF ST. OLIVER PLUNKETT



CANTERBURY

"Canterbury Tales" evokes memories of the 'mixum-gatherum' model of pilgrimage! It was our goal to make a pilgrimage for peace from the Shrine of St Oliver Plunkett in St Peters, Drogheda to the Martyrdom Chapel in Canterbury Cathedral, Kent. A linking of the two Martyrs in the journey for peace, reconciliation and forgiveness. Forgiveness is the key. St Oliver of Armagh to St Thomas of Canterbury.

The initiative was supported by Archbishop Eamon Martin who corresponded with Archbishop Justin Welby. Would the pilgrims find a welcome in Canterbury?

We were three pilgrims on the North Downs Way – walking into Canterbury in the late afternoon and well-received by the Dean, Dr Robert Willis and Vice-Dean, Canon Nicholas Papadopulos. With Nicholas we knelt and prayed at the Martyrdom, the exact place where Archbishop Runcie and Pope John Paul II knelt in 1982. A strong and moving ecumenical gesture.

Let there be peace – and forgiveness. Amen.







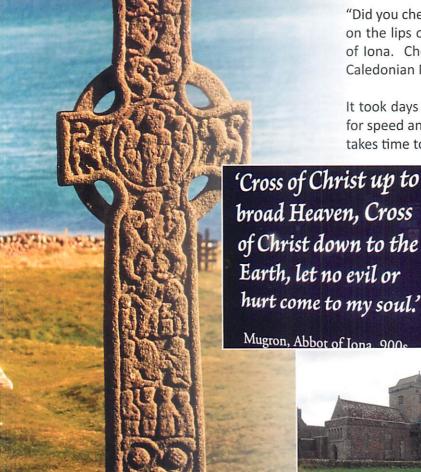
IONA

"Did you check the weather forecast?" A frequent question on the lips of pilgrims planning to travel to the Holy Island of Iona. Check the winds and the rain and the sailings of Caledonian McBrayne!

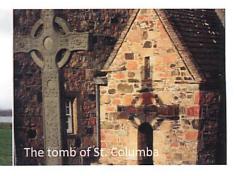
It took days for pilgrims to reach their goal when the fever for speed and haste had not yet overtaken the world. It still takes time to get from Oban to Iona!

We travelled safely, thank God, by ferry from Oban to the Isle of Mull and then local bus service across Mull to the ferryport for Iona – a short 20 minute crossing (weather permitting).

And here we are: the Holy Island of Colmcille – or St Columba. Not to be confused with Columbanus!! It's Iona. Let us pray.



The monastery on Iona



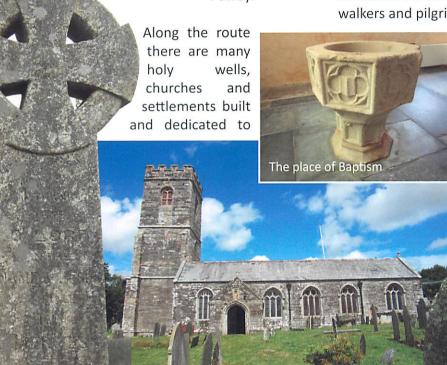
HE SAINT'S WAY

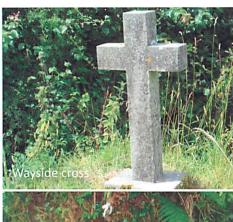
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The Saint's Way midcrosses Cornwall from coast to coast. covers lt kilometers from the harbour town of Padstow in the north to the southern port of Fowey.

the memory of saints such as St. Piran, St. Michael and St. Petroc.

At Lanlivery is a holy well and church dedicated to St. Brevita. The Saint's Way ends at the Church of St. Fimbarrus in the historic port of Fowey. Local tradition holds that St. Finbarr came from Ireland in the 7th century. Like many pilgrims he was bound for Rome but stayed long enough in Fowey to found a Christian community. Little did he know that centuries later he would still be remembered in this place and that modern walkers and pilgrims would be treading in his footsteps.







THE PILGRIM WALKER



Portuguese/ Spanish the origin of the term 'pilgrim' is 'per agros' - through the fields - hence, 'peregrinos'. All pilgrims serious go on foot to their destination. holy Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims stand for many others. Walking is a spiritual

act; walking on one's own induces meditation.

The wisest phrase for this activity is the Latin "solvitur ambulando" - "it is solved by walking", attributed to St Augustine.

The Chinese character for pilgrimage mean "paying one's respect to a mountain". "Paying respect" means climbing the mountain - as with Croagh Patrick. Ambrose Bierce defined a pilgrim as "a traveller that is taken seriously". The holy mountain is a true test of the serious pilgrim.

Walking to ease the mind is also an objective of the pilgrim. There is a spiritual dimension included - the walk itself is part of a process of purification. "Walking is the age-old form of travel, the most fundamental perhaps the most revealing" (Paul Theroux).

Some regard walking in an almost mystical way. It can inspire the gift of poetry and faith reflection. And so the pilgrim emerges as the committed walker, the thoughtful walker journeying towards the holy destination.

What is striking about the pilgrim endeavour is how a sense of belonging bonds together the pilgrim walkers creating a 'communitas' of immense character.

The journey 'per agros' becomes a sacred journey into the Heart of God.

THE WAY OF MEDITATION

- The Inner Journey

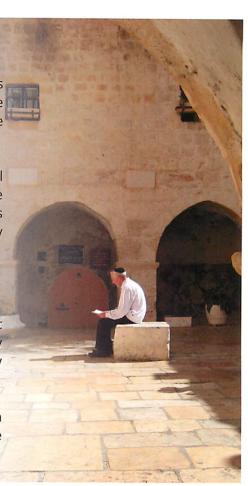
Just as pilgrimage has taken on a new lease of life in recent years, so too has the practice of meditation, in particular the practice of mindfulness. There are many forms of meditation, all of them having the goal of encouraging the journey to the Inner Self, probably the most important pilgrimage of all.

Christian Meditation has this goal and presents us with a guide for intentional living. A Benedictine monk John Main (1926-1982) recovered a simple tradition of silent, contemplative prayer from the early Christian monks. This tradition was embraced by Irish monks on Skellig Michael in the 6th century and is still followed today by many.

All meditation requires a discipline which includes silence and daily practice.

In the hectic pace of modern life, silence is still possible for people today. But to reach this stillness we need to devote time to the work of silence. The way to do this is to recite a short phrase, or prayer word, which today is commonly called a mantra.

Fr Lawrence Freeman OSB is a respected proponent of Christian meditation and there may well be a group near you. www.christianmeditation.ie. "The Spirit of God dwells in our hearts in silence." John Main



THE GUEST HOUSE

This being human is a guest house,
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
Some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all Even if they're a crowd of sorrows Who violently sweep your house Empty of its furniture.

Still, treat each guest honourably, He may be cleaning you out For some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
Meet them at the door, laughing
And invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
Because each has been sent
As a guide from beyond.

Rumi

SONG FOR THE PILGRIM JOURNEY

By Richard Gillard

"We are pilgrims on a journey,
We are travellers on the road;
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load.

Will you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you? Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too."

Buen Camino, pilgrims.



