



We are a pilgrim people. We are a people, who are always moving, always wanting more, never satisfied, never full and never finished.

We are a pilgrim people.

Go back to the Garden, we were created with pilgrim hearts: hearts to know, hearts to love, hearts to seek and glorify the God who made us and walks with us. And that has not changed. Life this side of Eden may be far busier, far more distracting, incredibly more difficult and not nearly as beautiful BUT our hearts are still the same. And as St. Augustine so truthfully prayed: *You have made us for yourself O Lord and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.*

We are a pilgrim people because we have hearts that will never rest; never be satisfied; never be complete until we find the God who is at the core of all we desire and seek through this life. And so we journey on, in our search. The problem is, most of us have forgotten who we are, a pilgrim people, or at the very least, defined “pilgrims” to be those who journey far, to offer their prayers in “traditionally” holy places. True, some of the largest assemblies of people around the world are indeed those of pilgrims. But what makes them “pilgrims” has very little to do with the destination of their journey or how far they travel from home but has all to do with that which they seek.

Throughout the scriptures, God seems incessantly trying to remind his people of their pilgrim hearts and to call them back to the path that leads them home. The Psalmist declares, “For I am a sojourner with you, a pilgrim as all my forbears were.” (39:14). And the letter to the Hebrews says it quite simply, “We are strangers and pilgrims on earth” (11:13). The word “pilgrim” literally comes from the Latin word meaning ‘resident alien.’ This world is not our home. And our life here on earth is just one stop on this all-encompassing pilgrimage (a physical and spiritual journey) home to the One of whom we truly belong. **We are a pilgrim people.**

*Since all are called to pilgrimage, though no two journeys are the same, how do we remember what we have forgotten about whom we are and the journey we are on? Without traveling far and wide, how do we awaken our pilgrim hearts? Or in our case, when we are about to set forth on this journey to a far away place how do we awaken our pilgrim hearts and remember that this journey is not really about the incredible and amazing and holy places we will embrace. Pilgrimage at its heart is not about the destination but the journey. It is not about where you travel but how you travel. Pilgrimage is a sacrament. It is a journey made on the outside to mark a journey on the inside. Ultimately pilgrimage moves us towards Him whom we seek. And so although the beauty, the adventure, the excitement of leaving home physically on pilgrimage is alluring, it is not essential (though quite helpful in learning to practice the holy habit of pilgrimage). This journey is also not about community; it’s not about blessings; it’s about seeking God alone. It’s about returning home. Community, joy, peace, holiness are fruit of pilgrimage not its intent. *On pilgrimage we learn to walk with God, literally: physically and spiritually.**

A few reminders for the road:

- Even **pilgrimage guides** are still pilgrims at heart and in practice. *We are ALL a pilgrim people.*
- **Detours**, getting lost and road blocks are part of the adventure. And are often the most important leg of the journey. *Asking for directions is ok*
- **Tourists and Pilgrims.**
 - And just as one can travel to holy places as a tourist, one can walk our path as a tourist, not fully engaged or fully present. Here to take snapshots of places along the way keeping their heart far removed and offering empty words. *This is a journey for pilgrims*

- **Companions along the way are essential to pilgrimage.**
 - But keep in mind that each pilgrim has their own journey. *And the temptation to focus inwards on each other is strong.* As fellow pilgrims we journey side by side looking out together for Him whom we seek.

- **Each holy place.**
 - These places we will embrace are spaces that have been carved out and made holy through the ceaseless prayers through the centuries. In these hallowed walls and on this holy ground, the air seems “thinner,” the gate, wider between God and Man and the intersection of Heaven and Earth more pronounced. The Saints and saints (of this world and the next) gather at the doors and sit beside you in the pews saying “Welcome pilgrims. Welcome to this respite. Welcome to this Holy Place.”

- **Pilgrimage is a prayer practice; a holy habit ...** therefore it takes practice and time to walk in the way of a pilgrim. It doesn't happen overnight.

- **This pilgrimage is about being present in the present.**
 - This pilgrimage is one of awakening; one of paying attention; one of remembering; one of ceaseless prayer; one of becoming present to God and thus becoming present to life (and this incidentally becoming more present to each other).

- **This is a journey of the heart not of the head.**
 - Prayer, conversation, listening, reading, noticing, and looking must also move and journey from activities of the mind to practices of the heart.

- **And as TS Eliot offered: the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.**

So welcome pilgrim! May you journey faithfully and honestly. May your heart be awoken to the sacred romance that calls to us through every moment of our life. And may Christ “dwell in your hearts through faith – that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have the strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you might be filled to the fullness of God, Himself.” (Ephesians 3:17-19). Welcome home. Welcome to the Pilgrim's Way.

