

Christ Church Gabriola

2020 Summer Pilgrimage Retreats: *for Times Such as These*



1. Beginning (July)
2. *Walking (August)*
3. Coming Home (September)

Introduction

What is a Pilgrimage? A pilgrimage is an intentional journey into an experience of unknowing and discomfort for the sake of stripping away preconceived expectations. The Latin root of the word pilgrimage, *peregrini*, means “strange” or “stranger.” The journey to become a pilgrim means becoming a stranger in the service of transformation.¹

*Something is happening to you in this wilderness
that does not happen when you are safe at home.*

~ Barbara Brown Taylor, *Altar in the World*

Prepare Space/Time

- *Carve out Time: decide on a 2-3 hour block of time, write it into your schedule and honor this commitment you have made to yourself.*
- *Prepare the Space: create a sacred space to begin your pilgrimage. What do you need on your journey? Bring this booklet as your guide . . . there may be other essentials, like a candle, journal, camera (needed for one of the exercises) or other objects that feel meaningful and necessary. Make sure there is room in this space for you to sit in stillness and write any reflections which arise.*
- *Turn off your phone and your computer and bring to the space the retreat materials and necessities.*

Suggested Schedule (Approx. 3 hours)

Adjust the times for your own needs (include all the pieces)

Opening Prayer (15)

Making the Way by Walking (60)

- *We Make the Way*
- *When I First*
- *Wild Space*
- *I Walk With*
- *Feeding Your Heart*

Ignation Prayer of Imagination and journaling (30)

Nature Bathing (60)

Reflection & Journaling (30)

Join Rev. Karen and others on August 27 at 10am on Zoom to share reflections on our personal retreat experiences.

Opening Blessing

Walk as slowly as possible, all the while imagining yourself moving through pools of honey and dancing with snails, turtles, and caterpillars.

Turn your body in a sunwise direction to inspire your dreams to flow upward. Imagine the trees are your won wise ancestors offering their emerald leaves to you as a sacred text.

Lay yourself down across earth and stones. Feel the vibration of dirt and moss, sparking a tiny (or trememdous) revolution in your heart with their own great longing.

Close your eyes and forget this border of skin. Imagine the breeze blowing through your hair is the breath of the forest and your own breath joined, rising and falling in ancient rhythms.

Open your eyes again and see it is true, that there is no “me” and “tree” but only One great pulsing of life, one sap which nourishes and enlivens all, one great nectar bestowing trust and wonder.

Open your eyes and see that there are no more words like beautiful, and ugly, good and bad, but only the shimmering presence of your own attention to life.

Only one great miracle unfolding and only one sacred word which is *yes*.

~ **Christine Valters Paintner**, *The Soul of a Pilgrim*

Making the Way by Walking

We make the way by walking
We came away with nothing
We ran from the home we've known
Down the stairs, running, scared
To face the great unknown
We left the front door open
No key for a souvenir
Nowhere to go and all we know
Is home will not be here
The path remains unclear
We make the way by walking

We left the well-worn circle
We left the city lights
Came up here where the air is clear
And the stars are bright at night
Maybe there's a distant valley
Maybe it's a ways away
We're all here on the new frontier
Because we knew we could not stay
Knew we could not stay
We make the way by walking

I climbed a little bit higher
Somethings you cannot unsee
I walked a little bit further
And the walking set me free
Then you were walking with me
And you asked if I knew the way
I made you laugh
When I said our path
Might be a road someday
We make the way by walking

We make the way by walking
Our steps are the votes we cast
The crazy few that have seen this view
May not be the last
The way that a pilgrim travels
Is to set out for parts unknown
So if history's kind
We're the ones who may find
The way we all come home
We make the way by walking

~ **David Wilcox**, *We Make the Way*

Listen to the song **by David Wilcox** on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqATuqedoGk>

When I First moved to the land where I live, I shared it with a herd of cows . . . with a hundred acres at their disposal, they had worn narrow paths across those acres to their favourite watering holes, shady spots, and clover patches . . . since I soon found myself following those same tracks when I walked the land, I think I understand something about why the cows use them. In most cases, the tracks mark the shortest route from point A to point B. Where they do not, that is because the cows have found ways to get where they are going without expending too many calories. In these cases, the tracks avoid both steep climbs and dicey descents, choosing long stretches under leafy tree lines wherever possible. For my purposes, the most valuable thing about the tracks is that I can see where I am putting my feet . . . I am convinced that this is normal human behaviour, which means that something extra is needed to override it. Why override it? Because once you leave the cow path, the unpredictable territory is full of life. True, you cannot always see where you are putting your feet. This means you can no longer afford to stay unconscious. You can no longer count on the beat-down red dirt path making all of your choices for you. Leaving it, you agree to make your own choices for a spell. You agree to become aware of each step you take, tuning all of your senses exactly to where you are and exactly what you are doing.²

~ **Barbara Brown Taylor**, *Altar in the World*

Wild Space “[Jesus] had a great deal of what some anthropologists have called ‘wild space’. Wild space is that part of each of us that doesn’t quite fit into our conventional worlds; it is that part of our own personal world that doesn’t completely overlap with the ordinary world – for us, this is the consumer market-oriented, individualistic, greedy world. Maybe we have some wild space because we are different in some way: poor, disabled, a person of colour, a refugee, gay or lesbian, and so forth.” Perhaps a pilgrimage or a pandemic offers us wild space. “Whatever makes it possible to think outside the box, to think that things ought to be different – not just for oneself but for the world – is useful wild space. Jesus had a lot of wild space; in fact, we could say he was a wild man. He imagined what he called the kingdom of God, where this new pattern for living would come about.” “We want this different world. Peter Short, a past moderator of the United Church of Canada, puts it this way: ‘The residual memory of paradise is still in you, lingering like a scent of

jasmine on a breeze. You are a paradise-haunted creature. If it were not so, why would you expect so much of the world? Why would you expect so much of yourself? See how you rage when hatred and greed and the desecration of the good earth make clear again and again that this is no paradise?’ (Emmanuel College Newsletter) Our wild space is a memory of where we came from and the hope of where we are going: from paradise to the kingdom of God, from living with all other creatures within the love of God to living once again all together within God’s love. Nothing short of this will satisfy us.³

~ **Sallie McFague**, *A New Climate for Theology*

I Walk With the scars of a lifetime of living. Some were self-inflicted wounds. Some were caused by others. Either way, they mark the trajectory of six decades of experience with the ins and outs, ups and downs, doubts and certainties of my relationship with living. They mark the territory of my being. I don’t regret a single one of them now. In fact, I’m thankful for them. My scars have the strange ability to remind me that my past was real, and what is real offers knowledge, understanding and an ultimate forgiveness.

~ **Richard Wagamese**, *Embers*

Feeding Your Heart

No matter how dark, the hand always knows the way to the mouth.

~ **Idoma Proverb** (Nigeria)

Even when we can’t see, we know how to feed ourselves. Even when the way isn’t clear, the heart still pumps. Even when afraid, the air of everything enters and leaves the lungs. Even when clouds grow thick, the sun still pours its light earthward.

This African proverb reminds us that the way is not a mystery. We have inner reflexes that keep us alive, deep impulses of being and aliveness that work beneath the journey or hardships we are struggling with.

We must remember: the hand cannot eliminate the darkness, only find its way to the mouth. Likewise, our belief in life cannot eliminate our suffering, only find its way to feed our heart.

- *Sit quietly and, with your eyes closed, bring your open hands to your mouth.*
- *Inhale as you do this and notice how, without guidance, your hands know the way.*
- *Breathe slowly, and with your eyes closed, bring your open hands to your heart.*
- *Notice how, without your guidance, your heart knows the way.*

~ **Mark Nepo**, *The Book of Awakening*

Questions for Reflection

-In what ways are you in wild space and in what ways are you on the well-worn path?

-What does it feel like to be walking this pilgrimage?

-What is the quality of your walking? Is it rhythmic, chaotic, arduous, or easy?

Ignatian Prayer of Imagination

Building on Lectio Divina from Pilgrimage 1, you're invited into an experience of this Ignatian prayer (St. Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish mystic and founder of the Jesuit order of priests). This kind of prayer is suited especially for the gospels; the idea is to visualize the story as if you were making a movie. Contemplating a gospel scene in this way is not simply remembering it or going back in time, rather through the act of contemplation, the Holy Spirit makes present a mystery of Jesus' life in a way that is meaningful for you now.

This form of prayer uses your imagination to dig deeper into the story so that God may communicate with you in a personal, evocative way. You will want to pay attention to the details: sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and feelings of the event and at some point, place yourself in the story.

Some might worry about going beyond the text of the story, or their imagination running too wild or going too far. If you have offered your time of prayer to God, then begin by trusting that God is communicating with you. If you are still uncomfortable, you might do some discernment with how you are praying. Where did your imagining lead you: closer to God or farther away? Is your imagining bringing you comfort or distress? At any point during the exercise you can return to the text itself.

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Some people find imaginative prayer difficult. They may not be able to picture the scene easily, yet they may have some intuition or gut reaction to the story. Or they may hear or feel the story more than visualize it. In a spirit of generosity, pray as you are able; don't try to force it. Rest assured that God will speak to you, whether through your memory, understanding, intellect, emotions, or imagination.

~ **Kevin O'Brien, SJ**, *The Ignatian Adventure*, edited

Step by Step Instructions for Ignatian Prayer of Imagination

1. Relax in your seat and centre yourself
2. Acknowledge yourself to be in God's presence and sit with that awareness
3. Acknowledge how you are within yourself in this moment
4. Ask for what you hope to receive from this prayer time (the graces you are praying for): if this is your first time with this practice, you might just pray for guidance as you try something new.
5. Read the text 5 or 6 times

Luke 24:13-35 That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognize who he was. He asked, "What's this you're discussing so intently as you walk along?" They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what's happened during the last few days?" He said, "What has happened?" They said, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people. Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel. And it is now the third day since it happened. But now some of our women have completely confused us. Early this morning they were at the tomb and couldn't find his body. They came back with the story that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn't see Jesus."

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Then he said to them, “So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can’t you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don’t you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?” Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him.

They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: “Stay and have supper with us. It’s nearly evening; the day is done.” So he went in with them. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared.

Back and forth they talked. “Didn’t we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?”

They didn’t waste a minute. They were up and on their way back to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and their friends gathered together, talking away: “It’s really happened! The Master has been raised up— Simon saw him!”

Then the two went over everything that happened on the road and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.

6. Close your eyes and “visualize” the scene and in the action involving as many of your senses as possible . . . as concretely as possible
7. Re-read the text 2 or 3 more times to be sure that your “recapitulation” contains everything in the text (if it’s easier to take a smaller portion of the text you’re drawn to, feel free)
8. Close your eyes and “set” the scene again. Be there . . . and let what happens happen; don’t worry if the experience takes you “off script”.
9. When the experience feels complete, take a short break.
10. Journal or draw about your experience.

Nature Bathing

Teachings come from everywhere when you open yourself to them. That’s the trick of it, really. Open yourself to everything and everything opens itself to you.

~ **Richard Wagamese**, *Embers*

This moving meditation was inspired by ancient Shinto and Buddhist practices first popularized in Japan. The main goal is to experience the natural world through all five senses: Listening, seeing, touching, smelling, and tasting . The senses help bring us into the present as we walk along as pilgrims, remaining awake, aware, and mindful of ourselves and our surroundings. This practice was originally designed for the forest, however it is applicable to any natural setting. Early morning and evening are great times to nature bath, since the air is moister and more fragrant, and the sounds are easier to hear.

Here’s what to do:

1. breathe deeply and slowly the fresh oxygen from the trees
2. practice using each of your senses, one at a time, e.g., see (not look), feel (not touch) listen (not hear), savour (not taste),
3. Notice the colours, shapes, sizes and textures in the scenery.
4. begin by absorbing the ‘big picture’ and then gradually zoom in to observe the details.

~ Thanks to **Rob Brockley** for these resources



Creating with Nature: As you walk along, practicing with your senses, you might notice things like twigs, leaves, shells, stones along your path that seem to call to you for more attention, but resist the urge to break off living things such as flowers from their stems or leaves off branches.

When you come to a place with a bit of a clearing on the ground: perhaps a wide and flat stone, a fallen log, or the beach, lay out your materials there. Allow some time to simply play with arranging the objects in various ways.



You might stack up a series of stones in the form of a cairn, or arrange the items in a circle to form a mandala. Just notice what feels satisfying, without any judgment. This is a time to play and explore. When it feels complete, you might take a photo to share with the group on zoom, then give thanks for this time of playing and creating, and leave your creation to be a blessing to others and be scattered by nature.



Reflection & Journaling

What blessings have you encountered along the way?

How has it fit with your expectations?

Walking is movement two of three on this pilgrimage journey. How might you continue “walking” through the month of August?

How is this pilgrimage a reflection of the larger pilgrimage of your life?

A Blessing

May the blessing of light be on you, light without and light within.

May the blessed sunlight shine upon you and warm your heart till it glows, like a great peat fire, so that the stranger may come and warm himself at it, as well as the friend.

May the light shine out of the eyes of you, like a candle set in the windows of a house, bidding the wanderer to come in out of the storm.

And may the blessing of the rain be on you - the soft sweet rain. May it fall upon your spirit so that all the little flowers may spring up, and shed their sweetness on the air.

And may the blessing of the great rains be on you, that they beat upon your spirit and wash it fair and clean, and leave there many a shining pool, and sometimes a star.

And may the blessing of the earth be on you - the great round earth; may you ever have a kindly greeting for people you pass as you are going along the roads.

May the earth be soft under you when you rest upon it, tired at the end of a day, and may it rest easy over you when at last you lay out under it, may it rest so lightly over you that your soul may be off from under it quickly and up and off, and on its way to the Creator. And now may the Creator bless you all and bless you kindly.

~ Adapted from *Traditional Irish Blessing*

¹ Valters Paintner, Christine. *The Soul of a Pilgrim* (Notre Dame: Sorin Books, 2015) p. 1-2.

² Taylor, Barbara Brown. *An Altar in the World*. (New York: HarperCollins, 2009). p. 71-71

³ McFague, Sallie. *A New Climate for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008). p. 152-153