

El Regreso de los Peregrinos (Return of the Pilgrims)

Reflections on the Pilgrim Journey, 2023

Long day of jostling, juggling.
Home. Quiet.
Ushered across oceans,
we return,
bags dropped, bodyspirits delivered.

Memories float by
streaming in the background ...
I sift and sort through
photos, receipts, souvenirs,
images, prayer cards,
sanctuaries, streets,
meals, menus,
clothes worn and wrinkled,
the grace of new friendships ...
the profound presence of sainted ones
guiding us on our pilgrim path,
Black Madonna thrumming
her mysterious call
through skies cut by serrated mountains.

We were called
- all 50 of us -
to walk this path from many parts
converging into one body,
all friends of Ignatius
invited into deeper communion,
becoming fellow pilgrims
with the ones
who walked before us.

Each day, a new
Spanish scenario unfolds:
history, sights,
sounds, smells,
songs.

“Guys! Guys!”
Our devoted guides watch over us –
guardian angels par excellence,
willing to go to battle with pickpockets,
counting, counting,
making sure not

one sheep has gone astray,
bearing us up
lest we dash our foot against a stone,
seeing to it that
each day a table is spread with
abundance
(tapas, paella, pigs cheeks, wine red &
white)
so we might
taste of the heavenly
banquet while
we walk the humble pilgrim path.

Each day, the blond one
organizes with gentle care ...
upholds for us the envelope
of golden prayers ..
and clarifies details
to give cheerful confidence to our day.

We step aboard and sing,
each day greeting the morning,
our personal troubadour leads
us to lift hearts and voices
coaxing our spirits awake
with mystery and melody.
Hail Marys spring to our lips,
and ancient prayers move through us,
ever-new
lifted up by statues, icons, mosaics,
and lofty spires touching the sky.

Each day a new
chapel greets us:
prayers well up in
song, gestures, stories of saints,
hands lifting,
quiet listening,
and prophetic preaching.
Our own vibrant pastors weave
their passion for faith with
the stories of saints that reach
across time

and we are invited over and again
to the bold path of laying down our swords,
becoming knights on the path of peace,
letting our wise mules guide us
to a life of service
mingled with humor and humility
under Mary's watchful eye.
Tears and laughter well up
to ensure we are
here, now, awake,
stirred by the call to sainthood
in ordinary lives.

More music-making carries us,
catching us off guard with
tenderness touching hearts
in the *Simple Song*
arising.

Take, Lord, Receive.
At each turn,
aisles, apses, and arches call
for dance to reach out and respond
(mundane movement will not do!)
Instead: rhythm reaching,
awe arching and bowing,
Magnificats made manifest,
Wrestling with angels, struggling and
surrendering,
Teach Me Lord to Be Generous,
Calling Maria,
Come Walk with Us, the Journey is Long!
Arms reach out as extension of the
interior castle to meet the
expanding presence of God's grace
radiating through us
into the sanctity of this living sanctuary
of Earth.
In the courtyard, our feet step the
stately pavane ...
and we pray for peace
arms and intentions reaching right
round the globe.
Amen? Amen!

Now we board the bus back to our lives.
We are the same, but different.
Not sure how to share these
stories ...
so rich like the radiance
of luminous colors bathing the
open space of our inner cathedrals
with awe in
the color cascading
through us from
morning blues
to golden afternoon offerings.

This journey is part of us now,
though no-one will quite
understand how or why
we were given this blessing.

All we know is
we were called ...
and Iñigo
danced through streets
and in courtyards with us ...
touched by an angel,
his limp kept us
warm and cozy in our humanity,
while the grace poured through.

We each climb off the bus in our
own corners now
shouting,
whispering,
humming,
in-breath and out-breath:
Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam
imprinted like seals into the wax
of our hearts
AMDG – All for the greater Glory of God!

With great gratitude -
From your fellow dancing pilgrim,
Betsey Beckman
June 24th, 2023