

PENTECOST *Today*

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JUBILEE YEAR PILGRIMAGE



Photo: Julie Park

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Renewing the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church.



Chairman's Corner

by Fr. Patsy Iaquina



Extending the Eucharist

As we continue to celebrate the Jubilee Year and reflect on the theme of Eucharist, we can focus on the sacrament's theological, practical, pastoral, and communal dimensions. There is a difference between "Communion" and "Eucharist." Yet the question can be moot in rural areas and in some urban areas where there is a lack of the ordained to preside over Eucharist. In these places, Sunday worship in the absence of a priest is practiced.

The Eucharist is meant to be a prophetic action of the people of God, a faith community. It is not some magic formula that focuses on individualism, which is antisocial, non-participatory, a me-and-Jesus approach. Jesus has called us to be alive, not static, to bond together with each other with his divine presence at the center. He calls us to intimacy with each other, to move, to go out, to share in his laying down of his life in service and mission. We are to take and eat and take and drink, that the food may be transformed into the life of Jesus active in us. We gather together, coming from ministry, spent and tired. We bring this sacrifice to the altar. We are nourished, fed and strengthened by the meal at the table of celebration. We are the ongoing celebration of the dying and rising of Jesus.

James Dallen in his book, *The Dilemma of Priestless Sundays*, states: "The Eucharist is not, first and foremost, the presence of the Lord in consecrated bread and wine, but the celebration of the paschal or Easter mystery, the Lord's dying and rising—what the tradition calls his 'sacrifice' and to which we are present in the celebration of the Eucharist." We are to do what Jesus did in table fellowship and in service. With the washing of the feet in the Gospel of John, the two actions are welded into one magnificent action of Jesus.

Sometimes I believe the Holy Spirit speaks with tongue in cheek when the bishops call for "active participation of the faithful." Do they mean during Mass, or *Ite, Missa est?* We have a tendency to apply this to the liturgy and yet every facet of our lives should be liturgy. The Spirit constantly and continually invites us to a more active participation in God's life.

The Eucharist is who we are as much as what we do. We are caught up into the Spirit of Jesus the Lord, his relationship with the Father in the power of his Holy Spirit. We are Eucharist—sacrificed for one another, food and drink and nourishment for one another. This is being fully alive, as the Father intends us to be. We are not to be some passive observer but one who cooperates with the movement of the Lord. In this way we partake of the glory of God—Jesus.

Jesus ate and drank with the poor, the lonely, the prostitutes, the sinners, the arrogant, the marginalized. His table fellowship was not just the altar of the cross, but the day in and day out celebration of the life of the people with whom he ate. Jesus was bringing forth the kingdom of God: creating justice, peace and joy as he extended the merciful compassion of the Father. He was full of hope. The meal was always holy. There was always a social and communal aspect to the feedings. His meals were extensions of the eucharistic meal. He could anticipate the great banquet which was to come.

During this Jubilee Year, Pope John Paul II calls us to revisit the documents of Vatican II. This may be an excellent time to reread the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and the *Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter* make for excellent reading as well (liturgypro@nccbuscc.com). ♦

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Taking a Journey of Faith: *Pilgrimage* and the Jubilee Year



Photo: Julie Parks

People do not make a pilgrimage to simply get away from it all... they are seeking, searching for something.



by Jim Murphy

Our Holy Father has invited all the faithful to make a pilgrimage during this Jubilee Year. He has even extended special blessings and indulgences to those who make such a journey of faith in this special time of grace. While many pilgrims are planning trips to Rome, the Holy Land, or various Marian shrines, the same blessings extend to those who make a pilgrimage to their own diocesan cathedral or other pilgrimage sites designated by the local diocese. It would seem that Catholics everywhere are “on the move,” traveling to holy places.

While the Holy Father’s call to pilgrimage in this year is certainly an affirmation of the value of holy journeys, it is by no means a new idea. In fact, pilgrimage is an ancient tradition that has its roots even before the time of Christ.

When God called Abraham to leave his home in Ur and sojourn to a land that God would give him, the man took his wife, his servants, his livestock and all of his belongings and headed out for a land that God would show him. Abraham, known as the Father of Faith, had many opportunities to trust that faith. Through many difficulties, set backs and trials, Abraham journeyed with God, until at last God brought Abraham and his family into the “promised land.”



When the people of Israel suffered as slaves in the land of the pharaohs, God called Moses to lead the people on a pilgrimage of freedom. For forty years the Jews traveled in the desert, often being sustained by God's miraculous provision. Finally, by God's grace they arrived back in the land God had given to Abraham.

Jesus' own life was one of journey. After his baptism, he journeyed to the wilderness. From there he traveled on foot all over the Holy Land relying on his heavenly Father to give him strength all the way. His pilgrimage took him to Jerusalem where he won victory over sin and death on the cross.

The twelve apostles, Paul of Tarsus, and indeed all Christian missionaries throughout the centuries made long and hazardous journeys in their efforts to spread the gospel. Like all pilgrims, they relied on the Lord to sustain and protect them in their travels.

As Christianity spread further, many places in the world became "holy ground." This was either due to a miracle performed at the site, some holy apparition, or the heroic death of a martyr.

Throughout the years, pilgrimages have become a kind of devotion, a way to honor God. When people were able to visit the holy sites they somehow felt drawn closer to God. It brought about a change in their own heart. To this day, people making the stations of the cross in our parishes are responding to the master's challenge, "If anyone would be my disciple, let them deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me." When people approach the crib at Christmastime, they are in a real way journeying with the shepherds and wise men to Bethlehem. Pilgrimage is in the deepest traditions of Christianity.

Whether a pilgrimage includes taking a jet across the Atlantic or a quiet stroll to the neighborhood church, there are some things common to all journeys of faith.



*Your journey of faith
will be a time of both
testing and blessing.
It will call you to journey
in the world and
within your own heart.*

A pilgrimage is neither a tour nor a vacation. People do not make a pilgrimage to simply get away from it all or just to relax a bit. People are seeking, searching for something. Sometimes a pilgrimage is done as an act of reparation or penance. Many pilgrimages are done as a way of thanking God for some favor granted. Others carry a special petition or prayer request in their heart as they travel. Some seek a healing or their own conversion. Everyone is looking for God and his touch of mercy. No matter what the particular reason, there is a purpose, a point to every pilgrimage.

Pilgrims rely on God for the success of their journey. Pilgrimages always have difficulties that should call us to rely on the Lord. Whether it's lost luggage in an airport, a bus without air conditioning, or an arthritic ankle that is acting up at the worst time, these opportunities remind us of our frailty, vulnerability and complete reliance on the Lord. Ironically, a pilgrimage group seems to receive more grace from the "disasters" that happened on the trip than they do from the events that go as planned. Remember, the difficulties we encounter on the journey are only opportunities for us to grow in faith!

Community is a part of the holy journey. On our travels, God will bring people into our lives who will help us, encourage us or challenge us. They may be our traveling companions, local folks or even the custodian mopping up the floor in church. Go with the flow! God has brought all of this together for his purposes. These are your companions on the journey...make the most of them!

Prayer and focus is an essential element of a pilgrimage. If your journey takes you to new and exciting places, it is very easy to become distracted. Remember, your journey has a purpose, a mission. Keep that focus in your heart. Keep your heart quiet and prayerful. The most significant part of your journey does not take place in a particular location but within the deepest recesses of your own spirit.

Your journey of faith will be a time of both testing and blessing. It will call you to journey both in the world and within your own heart. Do not fear the journey, nor scorn the struggle, for truly you will return home a different person than as you left.

Wherever you may journey in this year of Jubilee, go as a pilgrim. Humble and quiet your heart, immerse yourself in prayer, and above all else, seek...really seek the things of the Lord.

May God bless your journey, pilgrim. ♦

Former Chairman of the National Service Committee, Jim Murphy currently serves as a consultant to the NSC. He is a member of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS) board and a member of the North American Renewal Service Committee (NARSC). Jim and his wife, Susan, and their son, John Patrick, live in St. Joseph, Michigan.





Eucharist Bread for the Journey

by Ron Ryan

Last summer I made a pilgrimage, of sorts. I went to visit my parents who live about 1500 miles away. While we keep in touch on a regular basis, it had been several years since we had been together. My sister lives near my folks, and she and my brother-in-law were on hand for my arrival. There was, of course, a lot of hugging and chatting, but it wasn't long before my mother herded us all into the dining room for dinner.

There on the table were the foods I had grown up with: the special meat loaf, fried chicken, porcupine meat balls, lamb chops with fried rice, the orange Jell-o salad with carrots and pineapple...it seemed as if all the foods of my childhood were there. "I don't get much of a chance to make them any more," Mom explained a bit sheepishly, looking at the heaping dishes spread on the table for the five of us.

As we passed the serving bowls, each dish bought back a flood of memories, and we began to reminisce and tell stories, some of which we had heard a hundred times before. It was several hours before we left the table. As we cleared and washed the dishes, I knew deep within myself that no matter how far apart we lived, this was my family. I felt deeply in touch with the people and events that had formed my youth, that had made me the person I am today. It was quite a meal.

Something similar happens every week as we celebrate Eucharist. The Eucharist is the banquet table where we gather along the way of our pilgrimage, where sisters and brothers come together, where familiar food and drink unite us, where stories are told and retold. The Eucharist is where



we feast at the Lord's table and are reminded who we are and what our lives are all about.

The Eucharist gets us back in touch with the roots of our faith. We return to the stories of our ancestors. They say to us: "These are your people! You are children of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob! You are descended from Sarah and Miriam and Judith! The wisdom of the ancient ones is within you! The great acts of the apostles and prophets are your history!" Through these ancient stories we

hear the Word of God speaking to us throughout the millennia, shaping our identity as the people of God.

We retell the story of our Lord's great act of redemption: his Last Supper, his passion and death, his resurrection. We find in this remembering the model for our own lives as those who have been baptized into his death and resurrection, who have made the commitment to die to ourselves, to take up our cross and to follow him.

We take bread and wine, give thanks, bless it and share it. We do what Jesus himself did and what his followers have done every generation since. We recall that the food, though familiar, is no ordinary bread and wine; it is the body and blood of the one who loves us and sacrificed himself for us. In this banquet we are reminded of our deepest identity and are empowered to make the boldest of proclamations: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me!" (Gal. 2:20).

It is easy to forget that the Eucharist is one of the sacraments of initiation. Unlike baptism and confirmation, we celebrate Eucharist frequently because it is the ongoing celebration of our initiation into Christ. In this sense, each eucharistic liturgy is an acknowledgement that our entry into the mystery of our redemption is never finished in this life. We never fully live out our baptismal commitment to reject sin and to put on Christ. We never totally experience the fullness of the new life we are given through baptism. And so we return each week to the sacrament of initiation which, through its familiar food and stories, reminds us who we are and empowers us to live out our true identity.

No wonder we are told in the documents of Vatican Council II that the Eucharist is the source of our energy as Christians! No wonder our church stresses that it is necessary for us to come together to celebrate the Eucharist every week! It is in gathering at the banquet table of the Lord that we are strengthened to continue our baptismal pilgrimage. Without doing so consistently, it is easy to lose our way, to forget where we come from and where we are going.

In this Jubilee Year, may our celebrations of the Eucharist bring us back to the roots of our faith. May the familiar stories, familiar food and drink, and the familiar faces renew us. May we continue our pilgrimage strengthened by the tremendous love of God which is spread before us in this banquet. ♦

Ron Ryan is Editor of Pentecost Today. A former member of the National Service Committee, he is Pastoral Associate of St. Brendan Parish in Bothell, Washington.

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