

Pilgrimage at Home

Introduction

Pilgrimages may be defined as spiritual journeys to sacred places. People have undertaken pilgrimages for thousands of years to a variety of different places and for different reasons. Each pilgrimage is different and each pilgrim will experience something unique to him or her. However, each person should gain personal insights and spiritual benefits from the experience.

One of the main reasons for embarking on a pilgrimage is to take time out from everyday experiences and spend quiet time with God in prayer and reflection. God can be encountered anywhere and so there is no reason why a pilgrimage cannot be made at home. Traditional pilgrimages involve travelling and so a pilgrimage at home requires action as well as prayer and reflection – some movement is required even though it is in a limited environment. But pilgrimage is also a state of mind, providing time for the mind and spirit to wander at will.

As you follow the pilgrimage at home may you know the presence of God with you and be surrounded by his love.

Practicalities

This pilgrimage is divided into stages which relate to places in your home

- You may wish to complete the whole pilgrimage in one day or you may like to focus on one section each day, allowing time for more reflection or background reading.
- Try to allow yourself time at each stage, so that you have chance to notice your environment and your reactions to it. Note your feelings and emotions and spend time developing your relationship with God. You may wish to use a notebook to jot down your thoughts and responses.

Opening Prayers

Come God
Come walk with your people
for you alone are our strength and glory
and we put our trust in you

Come God
Come walk behind us, beside us, before us
for you alone are our shelter and direction
and we put our trust in you

Come God
Come seek and find and put us right
for you alone are the light of our darkness
and we put our trust in you

Come God
We know you are near; the sound of your voice calls us
Help us to respond with love and welcome you into our lives **Amen**



Front Door

A front door of a house is obviously a point of access and exit. It marks a boundary between the public and the private part of our lives.

It is at the front door that we welcome visitors or collect the post that has been delivered through the letterbox. The items ordered through online shopping or books from Amazon are deposited outside the front door. Last year we stood at our front doors to clap for the NHS and show our support for their work.

We can shut the front door and remain secure behind it but we can also shut the front door and feel isolated and lonely. The recent lockdown situation has made us all aware of these feelings of isolation when contact with the outside world is limited.

Pilgrimages usually start at the front door as we set out on a physical and spiritual journey. It may be a time of excitement or apprehension, unsure about how the journey will develop and where it will take us.

Read Genesis 18.1-15

This passage describes how Abraham and Sarah welcomed three visitors to their tent. They did not realise that they were welcoming God into their home. God blessed them and gave them the surprising news that they would have a son.

Imagine standing at your front door and welcoming God into your home. This is the start of the pilgrimage – welcoming God to be part of the journey, to travel with us in thought and prayer. What surprises will God present us with? How will God bless our lives as we travel together?

Prayer

God of our pilgrimage,
prepare your way in our hearts and make us ready to welcome you.
Through our praying, thinking, and reading
cleanse our thoughts, kindle our faith,
renew our commitment and increase our love,
preparing your way in our lives,
so that we may follow you faithfully
and serve you more effectively,
to the glory of your name. Amen

Kitchen

Many people refer to the kitchen as the heart of the home. It is often a gathering place for sharing food and conversation. When a party is held at home guests often gravitate to the kitchen. It's a place of work (preparing food and drink) and a place of relaxation where family and guests can feel comfortable.

Hospitality is an important part of our social lives. When visitors arrive we usually offer a cup of tea or coffee; it's a way of establishing a relationship

and helping new acquaintances to feel at ease. Sharing a meal with guests is an intimate occasion and a way of developing relationships.

There are many occasions in the Bible which indicate the importance of hospitality. Food and drink provide the background to many significant events. In our last reading Abraham and Sarah prepared a meal for the travellers who arrived at their tent; the Israelites survived in the wilderness by eating bread from heaven, manna; Jesus performed his first miracle at a marriage feast at Cana; the last time Jesus sat with all his disciples before his death was at a meal; and Jesus was revealed to the disciples on the road to Emmaus when he broke the bread at a meal.

Every time we celebrate Holy Communion in church we re-create the last Supper and communicate with God through bread and wine. The meal becomes the focal part of our worship.

Read Luke 11.1-4

We know these words as the Lord's Prayer – Jesus' guidance for us in how to communicate with God. Within the prayer is the phrase "Give us this day our daily bread". This is not just a prayer for food but also a prayer for spiritual nourishment. In biblical times bread was more important than it is today when we are able to enjoy a varied diet. Bread was also used in place of cutlery to scoop up food from a communal dish, so bread was the means by which all food was received into the mouth.

This helps us to understand the significance of Jesus referring to himself as "the bread of life". He is the means by which we receive our spiritual food. As we pray the Lord's Prayer we are remembering that we are daily dependent on God's grace to sustain us.

Hold a piece of bread in your hands. Break the bread, remembering Christ's sacrifice for us on the cross. Eat the bread slowly, giving thanks for the gift of life which his sacrifice brought to us.



Prayer

Jesus, bread of life,

Help me to remember that I cannot live on this bread alone,
but that I am dependent on you.

Help me to open my heart and mind

to all the gifts that you would give me. Amen

Living Room

We are probably all spending more time in our living rooms at the moment than we usually do because of the lockdown situation. It should be a place of relaxation but it may become oppressive if we spend too much time there. Is this the place where you catch up on the newspapers, watch television, read books? Do you spend time here in the evening talking to other members of the family, finding out how their day has gone?

Through the television, newspapers, books and conversations with our families we become involved in stories – our story and the stories of other people. Stories help us to create visual images of different environments and people. They help us to build relationships and to deepen our understanding of the world.

Jesus used stories or parables in the same way – to help his audience gain greater insight into the purpose of their lives and to develop their relationship with God. Of course, he often made the parables challenging, encouraging his audience then and us nowadays to think more deeply about the meaning behind them.

Read Luke 5.36-37

These two verses contain two short parables using everyday objects of clothes and wine. The first one states that if a patch is taken from a new garment to patch up an old one, you would ruin both garments. The second story says that it is a mistake to put new wine in old goatskins. The old goatskin would be brittle with age and so it would split and spill the wine.

Jesus is telling us that Christianity is a new way of thinking that requires us to change, to see things differently, and to live our lives in a new way.

Look around your living room and think of a book you have read or a television programme that you have seen. What view of the world did this book or this programme give you? Did it give any insights into the relationships between people? Did it reflect or challenge the Christian viewpoint?



Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to us of the new life you have made possible
through your surrender and sacrifice.
Unfold to us the true nature of discipleship,
what it means to love and follow you,
and help us to respond,
so that we may rise to new life with you. Amen

Bedroom

There are times when the only place to totally relax is in bed. Our bedrooms should offer us privacy and comfort. Programmes about home design on television often present the bedroom as a place of luxurious self-indulgence or calm self-reflection – a sort of haven of personal space.

The bedroom may also be a good place for prayer at the end of a tiring day. Daily prayer can be a challenge. Finding a quiet, undisturbed moment to think about God, to listen to God, and to speak to God is not easy. In bed at night is a good place and time to reflect on the day that has passed and give thanks for the good things that have happened. But it is also time to hand over to God the concerns and worries of the day, so allowing the body and mind to rest. It is in those quiet moments that the Spirit can come to us and bring us a sense of peace.

Read Matthew 11.28

This is a well-known verse “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”. It is a comforting verse to repeat when life seems overwhelming. Many people are facing anxieties and frustrations at the moment because of the Covid situation. This may be worries about the health of family and friends, or bereavement, or financial pressures, or concerns about educating children at home. There’s the tension created by being cooped up at home and yet the fear of going out and meeting people.

This verse from St Matthew’s gospel seems to indicate that Jesus knows all about this – he understands. He will take the burden from us if we will just surrender all our concerns to him. So, sit quietly in the bedroom or lie on the bed and offer all those concerns to God. Feel the peace of God’s presence with you.

Prayer

Lord God, you created the world in six days
and blessed the seventh by resting.

Help me to balance my life with action and inaction, work and rest.

Give me the gift of resting in you,
allowing your hands to hold me and all my concerns,
feeling surrounded by your love,
safe and at peace. Amen

Bathroom

The bathroom may seem like a strange place for a pilgrimage, but here we can focus on the importance of water in our lives. In Britain we seem to talk a lot about the weather and inevitably that focuses on whether it is raining or not, whether we are experiencing floods or droughts! Water is an essential part of our lives – for growing food and flowers, for cooking and drinking, for washing and bathing.

We are fortunate in this country that we can turn on a tap and immediately get plentiful supplies of clean water. Many people around the world face a daily challenge to collect sufficient water for their needs.

Water features in the Bible in many different ways – the creation story, the crossing of the Red Sea, Jesus walking on the water, the disciples catching fish etc.

Read John 4.4-26

Water was a precious commodity in Jesus' time. It was usually women who were responsible for drawing water from a well and carrying it to their homes. It was recognised as something essential but precious. This beautiful story reminds us that God provides living water – something essential but precious for our spiritual life.

In baptism we use water that has been blessed to remind us of the living water of God. We are made part of God's family and start our faith journey with the gift of water. We are now at the end of our pilgrimage journey but we continue with our spiritual journey throughout life. Run some water into the washbasin, dip your finger in it and make the sign of the cross on your forehead to remind you of your baptism and to give thanks for the living water that God has given us through his son, Jesus.

Prayer

Lord, our Living Water,
help me to remember you at all times of the day.
Help me to realise that you are essential
to my existence;
that without you life is dry and filled with dust.
Help me to take the time to drink
at the spring of your refreshing and life-giving waters,
so that I in my turn may live in a way that gives life to others. Amen



Closing Prayers

Lord, as you draw near to us, we draw near to you,
to be aware of your presence, to rest in your love,
to hear your call to respond with eagerness.