

A hiker with a backpack is seen from behind, walking across a vast, open landscape. In the distance, there are large, rugged mountains under a cloudy sky. The scene is captured in a wide-angle shot, emphasizing the scale of the environment.

A Pilgrimage for All

BY TAMARA RAMIREZ



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PILGRIMAGE IS

“A transformative journey with a sacred center” - Phil Cousineau

What do you think of when you hear about someone going on a pilgrimage? Maybe you think of Muslims making their Hajj to Mecca? Or possibly something the devout Christian does when they journey to Israel or the Camino? Or does it conjure up images of individuals going to settle new lands for religious purposes, like our nation's founders? These things are all accurate descriptions of a pilgrimage. However, you might consider the idea that pilgrimage is a human need. That these intentional encounters with God lead to personal growth and spiritual transformation. It can take on many different forms. It can happen in your local area and look like: a hike, walking a labyrinth or stations of the cross. It can be a service-focused journey (short-term mission trip). It can also look like international travel to ancient ruins, heart places, or destinations of profound beauty or culture. While a pilgrimage can take hours or months, it has less to do with the details of the journey than the heart and focus of the traveler.

"A PILGRIM IS SOMEONE WHO GOES ON A JOURNEY IN THE HOPE OF ENCOUNTERING GOD, OR MEETING HIM IN A NEW WAY."

N.T. WRIGHT



DESIGN YOUR PILGRIMAGE

**"A journey of a thousand miles must
begin with a single step."**

- LAO TZU

PILGRIMAGE IN A DAY

"The single most sacred pilgrimage you will ever make is the one right where you are."

-Molly Kate Brown

Every year on Saturday before Easter I head to our local Catholic church. I drive around the back of the sanctuary and the cemetery where at the top of the hill is a labyrinth surrounded by a wooded path. There I walk the stations of the cross and reflect on the valley view below. I take my journal, art supplies, and worship music and I wait in the Lord's presence. This annual pilgrimage provides me with an opportunity to sit with open hands and heart in the painful, prolonged waiting between death and resurrection. It's become a vital part of my Holy week journey.

Day pilgrimages are perfect for those who are in a season of life where they are unable to get away for more than a few hours. I believe, with planning, everyone can experience the sacredness of a pilgrimage, if only for a short amount of time. Though ideally, one could find a local retreat center, church, museum, art gallery, or garden to spend time in, it is possible to transform your bedroom or back yard into Holy ground.

SERVICE-FOCUSED JOURNEY

"The pilgrim of love does not need a map or chart. 'I know my road, it leadeth to His heart.'"

- Amy Carmichael

Years ago, when I was missions director of a small congregation, I was asked by a missionary partner in Hungary to bring a team to train Hungarian church leaders on how to share the Gospel message using ALPHA. We gathered the team and got to work preparing presentations and learning about the culture. While we prepared to "DO," this missionary invited us to a pilgrimage. His words, not mine. He asked us to read a book in advance focusing on contemplative practices like Lectio Divina. He saw it as his role to lead us in a spiritual pilgrimage, not a mission trip. It was transformative for each member of our team. This journey became less about doing and more about becoming.

During our time in Hungary, this missionary shared his ideas about short-term teams. He feels these trips have value but more as a way for the western church to engage in the ancient practice of pilgrimage. I wonder what it would look like if more churches took this approach to missions. If they were clear on the idea that all who went out to serve on a short-term team were actually on a transformative journey through a divine encounter. How would this change the relational dynamic between the traveler and the host? How would this impact all involved and how they view themselves?

PILGRIMAGE THROUGH TRAVEL

"The geographical pilgrimage is the symbolic acting out an inner journey. The inner journey is the interpolation of the meanings and signs of the outer pilgrimage. One can have one without the other. It is best to have both. "

- Thomas Merton

Last year, Ken and I were able to travel to China for the first time. Unlike most of our travel, this trip was strictly for pleasure. We wanted to completely unplug, see beauty, enjoy new foods, and embrace Chinese culture. We love spontaneity and independence in our travels, but because we didn't know anyone in China and our communication skills were limited to the ever-reliable Google-Translate (and some safety concerns) we opted to use a travel agency and hire guides.

We decided to fly into Shanghai and travel through south/central China. We were guided through ancient cities that have survived through millenniums of dynasties and revolutions. We ate like royalty, enjoying the finest cuisine that the area has to offer. Sat in silent wonder at the tops of rocky mountains overlooking the "Sky Sea." We observed a modern culture that outshone Las Vegas and people doing work that robbed them of dignity. Most nights we fell asleep exhausted and full of wonder.

There is something about international, cross-cultural travel that disarms us and opens our heart to what God has to show us about Himself, His creation, and His children. It even reveals the tiny (or not so tiny) wounds deep in our hearts. The beautiful and humbling disorientation of these journeys gives us space to see both ourselves and the world around us through His eyes. It was during this journey where I encountered God and He opened my heart to the idea the pilgrimage is a universal experience and prompted me to write this book.

A person's feet in red shoes walking on a cobblestone path. In the background, there is a large circular stone seal or emblem, possibly a university crest, featuring a figure and some text. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent grey filter.

CONSIDER THE DETAILS

**“With the keeping of our focus,
keen preparation, attention to the
path below our feet and respect for
the destination at hand, it is possible
to transform even an ordinary trip
into a sacred journey, a pilgrimage.”**

- PHIL COUSINEAU

SELECT YOUR DESTINATION

"The boat is safer anchored at the port; but that's not the aim of boats."

- Paulo Coelho

Several years ago, my husband and I decided we needed to take our youngest daughter to Yosemite National Park. I grew up in the Eastern Sierras and for me, its beauty far surpasses that of any human creation. We left for this journey just days after I returned from a trip to Uganda and I was mentally, spiritually, and emotionally exhausted. I envisioned myself arriving in Yosemite and laying on a cool, flat, granite rock in the summer sun with only the noise of songbirds, water moving over rock, and rustling leaves breaking the blissful silence. I looked forward to breathing mountain air and having my soul refreshed.

When we pulled into our crowded campground in the Yosemite Valley, I could see the "The Hills Are Alive with The Sound of Music" Yosemite of my childhood had changed. We are now a culture of experiences and travel. As Instagram has gained popularity so have some of the remotest travel destinations. There was literally no space for quiet. One morning I walked out to the river and set myself up with a clear view of Yosemite Falls. It was cathedral-like in its beauty. I had my journal, art supplies, and worship music ready, but several early-riser families decided to gather near me and play football along the water's edge. As a result, I spent much of my morning dodging balls rather than praying.

After a few tantrums and angsty conversations expressing my grief I got proactive and found a few places that were less traveled. Places where I could intentionally sit in silence before the Creator of the Universe. All this to say, be thoughtful and intentional in selecting where you will do your pilgrimage. Pre-journey planning is vital. Ask yourself these questions:

- Will this location be accessible for me?
- Will I be able to cultivate a sense of silence in this location?
- Will this location provide enough separation from my daily responsibilities?
- What do I need to know about this location and its people?
- How can I ensure that my presence in this location brings respect, love and dignity to its people and its culture.
- How can I leave this location better than I found it from a local's perspective.
- Why did I choose this location? What am I hoping to take away from it? Am I bringing more than I'm taking?

SET ASIDE TIME

"God never hurries. There are no deadlines against which he must work. Only to know this is to quiet our spirits and relax our nerves."

- A.W. Tozer

We had just 24 hours to get a full tour of NYC and we planned to do it all: carriage ride in Central Park, Empire State Building, China Town, Statue of Liberty, Time Square and eat NYC style pizza. We were on our way back from Haiti via JFK (weird route, but the cheapest). We decided to extend our layover so a few of our team members could experience a bit of the city and visit a Haitian, missionary friend living in Brooklyn. For those of you who have been to New York and are thinking this is impossible, I am here to tell you it is not. It is, you can barely catch your breath, hard but possible.

A pilgrimage is not the time to over stack your agenda and shorten your time frame. Even though not sleeping and running through the streets of one of the world's largest cities can be fun, it leaves little time for contemplation and profound encounters. So, whether you are taking hours or months on your journey, make sure you are giving yourself an abundance of time.

PACK YOUR BAGS

"For me, success is, during this early pilgrimage, to leave the woodpile a little higher than I found it."

- Paul Harvey

I typically pride myself on packing light (we can discuss my pride issue later). I can usually get everything I need for a 14-day trip into one carry-on. But not on my journey to Saudi Arabia. This trip required a huge piece of luggage my family lovingly calls BIG RED. It is so big that people often have trouble fitting it into their trunks. So why did this 10-day journey require such a large piece of luggage? Was I packing large items of clothing to keep me warm? NO! Was I taking multiple types of attire for each day because each event required a clothing change? NO! Was I bringing a carload of gifts? NO! So why was Big Red required? One word, FEAR. I was afraid my style of dress would bring offense or shame to our hosts. I was afraid I wouldn't look good. I was afraid I wouldn't have what I needed. Basically, I was afraid of not being or offering enough. Have you ever fear-packed?

When packing for a pilgrimage keep it simple. Just the bare necessities. Remember, on a pilgrimage all that is taken must be carried by you. Here are some pilgrimage must-haves:

1. Access to scripture
2. Journal and a pen
3. Water
4. Snack if needed
5. You... You must fully show up: heart, mind and strength

DESTINATION OPTIONS

CIRCLE FINAL SELECTION

DATES

PACKING LIST

WELCOME TO

The Eight Stations of Pilgrimage

Now that you have selected your location, your timeframe and packed your bags, you are ready to enter a time of Pilgrimage.

gti
Tours

HEART PREPARATION

Take note: the first half of this journey is spent preparing your heart. Because we often spend our time away doing, it is vital we take time to be present before God.

STATION ONE

Entering a sacred space is when you focus on quieting your heart, mind, and spirit and commit a time and place as holy and set-apart. For some this looks like sitting in a centering prayer stance and for others this may require a short walk, yoga session or cardio exercise to release pent up energy. You know what you need. There is freedom in every station.

STATION TWO

This is a time of prayer and vulnerability. It is a time to ask yourself important questions and identify what brought you to this pilgrimage. What is your heart's desire? What are you yearning for?

STATION THREE

This is the time when you look toward and plan for the end of your pilgrimage journey. When you return home what gift do you hope to possess? By setting an intention you give your heart, mind and body a direction to move. Without a clear intention, you can become a tourist rather than a participant in your journey.

STATION FOUR

Pilgrimage, by its very nature, requires laying down all that entangles us in the everyday of living. We must leave safe and familiar at home. At this station you intentionally lay down obligations of family, work, and community, but also things keeping us tied down internally, like; pride, fear, insecurity, shame and anger. In short, we are laying down anything acting as a barrier between ourselves and the divine.

STATION FIVE

In this phase of the journey you have to push through “the impossible.” You may find yourself looking up a literal or figurative steep rocky mountain or a white-capped ocean abyss. It will take all you have to place one foot in front of the other, facing your weakness and holding tightly to God’s promises.

STATION SIX

The encounter is what our heart longs for but it usually happens when we feel at our weakest point. When we, like Moses, David, or the woman at the well, find ourselves at our lowest and attempting to hide from the realities of our journey. Then, suddenly God is there. This may look like a blinding light or a gentle whisper. Whatever the form, it leaves you changed.

STATION SEVEN

You are now permanently changed, marked by His presence. It is vital one takes time for quiet contemplation and reflection before returning home and facing an unchanged reality.

STATION EIGHT

Ultimately, returning home means opening the door, turning on the lights, setting the luggage aside, and allowing your newly transformed self to fully show up in your world. You are now setting off on the real pilgrimage, the true itinerary of a life towards God in communion with the family of the church.

A coastal landscape featuring several sea stacks in the ocean. The largest rock formation is on the right, with a smaller one to its left. The sky is filled with soft, grey clouds, and the water is calm, reflecting the sky and the rocks. The overall mood is serene and quiet.

STATION ONE

ENTERING SACRED SPACE

CONTEMPLATION

**"God speaks in the silence of the heart.
Listening is the beginning of prayer."**

- Mother Teresa

BREATH PRAYER

Read silently or aloud Psalm 46:10,
"Be still, and know that I am God."
Pause after each phrase to take three
or four deep breaths before moving to
the next phrase.

Be still, and know that I am God...

Be still, and know that I am...

Be still, and know...

Be still...

Be...

"I felt in need of a great pilgrimage, so
I sat still for three days and God came
to me."

- Kabir

19 And now we are brothers and sisters in God's family because of the blood of Jesus, and he welcomes us to come right into the most holy sanctuary in the heavenly realm—boldly and with no hesitation. 20 For he has dedicated a new,[i] life-giving way for us to approach God. For just as the veil was torn in two, Jesus' body was torn open to give us free and fresh access to him!

21 And since we now have a magnificent King-Priest to welcome us into God's house, 22 we come closer to God and approach him with an open heart, fully convinced by faith that nothing will keep us at a distance from him. For our hearts have been sprinkled with blood to remove impurity and we have been freed from an accusing conscience and now we are clean, unstained, and presentable to God inside and out!

Hebrews 10: 19-22 The Passion Translation (TPT)

**"IN PRAYER IT IS BETTER TO HAVE A HEART WITHOUT WORDS
THAN WORDS WITHOUT A HEART." - JOHN BUNYAN**

REFLECTION

Spend at least 5 minutes with God in complete silence with a heart of gratitude for this time and the freedom to enter His presence.

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STATION TWO

THE YEARNING

CONTEMPLATION

**"All joy emphasises our pilgrim status;
always reminds, beckons, awakens desire.
Our best havings are wantings."**

C.S. Lewis

"There may be a time in life when one is tired of everything and feels as if all one does is wrong, and there maybe some truth in it -- do you think this is a feeling one must try to forget and to banish, or is it 'the longing for God,' which one must not fear, but cherish to see if it may bring us some good? Is it 'the longing for God' which leads us to make a choice which we never regret?"

- Vincent Van Gogh

Blessed are those whose strength is in
You, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.
Psalm 84: 5

In the same way that nursing infants cry for milk, you must intensely crave the pure spiritual milk of God's Word. For this "milk" will cause you to grow into maturity, fully nourished and strong for life.

1 Peter 2:2 TPT

"It is a joy to see everything in passing
but the voice that calls me
I feel much more deeply.
The force that pushes me,
force that attracts me,
I cannot explain,
Only the One above knows"

- Eugenio Garibay Baños,

**"In seeking after what the soul desires we become pilgrims with
no home but the path the soul would have us follow."**

- Michael Meade

REFLECTION

1. What is your heart longing for? What is your deepest desire? What does your mind gravitate toward when you give it space to dream?
2. What are you hearing over and over again? What makes itself known even in the busyness of life?

SEE PAGE 23 FOR A DEEPER DIVE INTO DISCERNING YOUR HEART'S DESIRES.

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PRACTICE SEEKING YOUR HEART'S DESIRE

STEP ONE

Dedicate this time to God. Ask for the light of His Holy Spirit to notice your deepest desires, to name them accurately, and to respond appropriately to what you find.

STEP TWO

When you are ready, ask yourself, as you sit quietly in the presence of God,

"What do I want, right this minute?"

STEP THREE

When you recognize what it is that you want, give it a name and jot it down in your journal. Return to the relaxed attentiveness. Ask again:

"What do I want, right this minute?"

STEP FOUR

Again notice, name and jot it in your journal.

Repeat this process, until no more desires surface. After each, return to your relaxed attentiveness.

STEP FIVE

Now look at all the desires you have named. Notice which seem to be the most central, the most important, the most attractive, the most full of energy. Select one that, for now, seems most central, and bring it back directly into your attention.

STEP SIX

Without judging it or yourself, ask:

"And what is underneath this desire? What desire is even more basic than this one?"

STEP SEVEN

Gently repeat this question for each subsequent desire that surfaces. Ask after each one,

"Is there even more basic desire underneath this one?"

STEP EIGHT

When you come to the deepest desire, honor it as central to who you are.

STEP NINE

Finally, offer it back to God, just as it is, an expression of who you are at this moment.

STATION THREE

SETTING INTENTION



CONTEMPLATION

"The object of pilgrimage is not rest and recreation to get away from it all. To set out on a pilgrimage is to throw down a challenge to everyday life."

- Huston Smith

MY LORD GOD,

I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE I AM GOING.
I DO NOT SEE THE ROAD AHEAD OF ME.
I CANNOT KNOW FOR CERTAIN WHERE IT WILL END.
NOR DO I REALLY KNOW MYSELF,
AND THE FACT THAT I THINK I AM FOLLOWING YOUR WILL
DOES NOT MEAN THAT I AM ACTUALLY DOING SO.
BUT I BELIEVE THAT THE DESIRE TO PLEASE YOU
DOES IN FACT PLEASE YOU.
AND I HOPE I HAVE THAT DESIRE IN ALL THAT I AM DOING.
I HOPE THAT I WILL NEVER DO ANYTHING APART FROM
THAT DESIRE.
AND I KNOW THAT IF I DO THIS YOU WILL LEAD ME BY THE
RIGHT ROAD,
THOUGH I MAY KNOW NOTHING ABOUT IT.
THEREFORE WILL I TRUST YOU ALWAYS THOUGH
I MAY SEEM TO BE LOST AND IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH.
I WILL NOT FEAR, FOR YOU ARE EVER WITH ME,
AND YOU WILL NEVER LEAVE ME TO FACE MY PERILS ALONE.

- THOMAS MERTON

BY NO MEANS DO
I COUNT MYSELF
AN EXPERT IN ALL
OF THIS, BUT I'VE
GOT MY EYE ON
THE GOAL, WHERE
GOD IS BECKONING
US ONWARD—TO
JESUS. I'M OFF AND
RUNNING, AND I'M
NOT TURNING BACK.
PHILIPPIANS 3:14 MSG

"ONE SHOULD THEREFORE NOT RELY ON MERE WORDS, BUT
EVERYWHERE SEARCH FOR THE INTENTION BEHIND THEM."

- EDWARD CONZE

REFLECTION

Now that you have identified your holy yearning it is time to set your intention, focus and direction.

1. What is your focus and intention for this journey?
2. What do you need to take with you on this journey to help you keep your eyes on God?

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STATION FOUR

SEPARATION

CONTEMPLATION

"Your task is not to seek for love,
but merely to seek and find all the
barriers within yourself that you have
built against it."

- RUMI

7 And He called the twelve
[disciples] and began to send them
out [as His special messengers] two
by two, and gave them authority
and power over the unclean spirits.
8 He told them to take nothing for
the journey except a mere walking
stick—no bread, no [traveler's] bag,
no money in their belts— 9 but to
wear sandals; and [He told them] not
to wear two tunics.

- Mark 6:7-9 Amplified Bible

"Conversion is not the smooth, easy-
going process some men seem to
think... It is wounding work, this
breaking of the hearts, but without
wounding there is no saving... Where
there is grafting there will always
be a cutting, the graft must be let in
with a wound; to stick it onto the
outside or to tie it on with a string
would be of no use. Heart must be
set to heart and back to back or there
will be no sap from root to branch.
And this, I say, must be done by a
wound, by a cut."

John Bunyan

**"PILGRIMAGE MEANS BEING ALERT TO THE TIMES WHEN ALL
THAT'S NEEDED IS A TRIP TO A REMOTE PLACE TO SIMPLY
LOSE YOURSELF, AND TO THE TIMES WHEN WHAT'S NEEDED
IS A JOURNEY TO A SACRED PLACE, IN ALL ITS GLORIOUS AND
FEARSOME MASKS, TO FIND YOURSELF. "**

PHIL COUSINEAU

REFLECTION

1. What is God asking you leave behind as you enter this journey?

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STATION FIVE

THE JOURNEY



CONTEMPLATION

"He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you but
to do justice, and to love kindness, and to
walk humbly with your God?"

Micah 6:8

"Seek the wisdom that will
untie your knot. Seek the path
that demands your whole
being."

-RUMI

"O You who are mad about
Your creature! true God and
true Man, You have left Yourself
wholly to us, as food, so that we
will not fall through weariness
during our pilgrimage in this
life, but will be fortified by You,
celestial nourishment"

-St. Catherine of Siena

A voice said, "Climb. And he said, „How shall I climb?the
mountains are so steep that I cannot climb."

The voice said, "Climb or die."

He said, "But how? I see no way up those steep ascents. This that
is asked is too hard for me."

The voice said, "Climb, or perish, soul and body of thee mind
and spirit of thee. There is no second chance for any son of man.
Climb or die."

Then he remembered that he had read in the books of the bravest
climbers on the hills of the earth that sometimes they were aware
of the presence of a Companion on the mountains who was not
one of the earthly party of climbers.

And he remembered a word in the Book of Mountaineers...
it heartened him, for it told him that he was created to walk in
precarious places, not on the easy levels of life.

-Amy Carmichael

**"FOR PILGRIMS WALKING...EVERY FOOTFALL IS DOUBLED,
LANDING AT ONCE ON THE ACTUAL ROAD AND ALSO ON THE
PATH OF FAITH"**

-ROBERT MACFARLANE

REFLECTION

1. What are some hard pieces for you on this journey?
2. Where are you seeing joy and peace?
3. Where do you need to offer yourself kindness and mercy?
4. Where is God at right now? Ahead of you, behind you, with you, or are you just unsure of His presence at all?

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STATION SIX

THE ENCOUNTER



CONTEMPLATION

**“As I make my slow pilgrimage through
the world, a certain sense of beautiful
mystery seems to gather and grow.”**

A. C. Benson

1-3 God is a safe place to hide,
ready to help when we need him.
We stand fearless at the cliff-edge of doom,
courageous in seastorm and earthquake,
Before the rush and roar of oceans,
the tremors that shift mountains.
Jacob-wrestling God fights for us,
God-of-Angel-Armies protects us.
4-6 River fountains splash joy, cooling God's city,
this sacred haunt of the Most High.
God lives here, the streets are safe,
God at your service from crack of dawn.
Godless nations rant and rave, kings and
kingdoms threaten,
but Earth does anything he says.
7 Jacob-wrestling God fights for us,
God-of-Angel-Armies protects us.
8-10 Attention, all! See the marvels of God!
He plants flowers and trees all over the earth,
Bans war from pole to pole,
breaks all the weapons across his knee.
“Step out of the traffic! Take a long,
loving look at me, your High God,
above politics, above everything.”
11 Jacob-wrestling God fights for us,
God-of-Angel-Armies protects us.
Psalm 46 MSG

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.
32 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?”

Luke 24: 31-32

**"I AM SO CLOSE, I MAY
LOOK DISTANT. SO
COMPLETELY MIXED
WITH YOU, I MAY LOOK
SEPARATE. SO OUT IN THE
OPEN, I APPEAR HIDDEN.
SO SILENT, BECAUSE I AM
CONSTANTLY TALKING
WITH YOU."
- RUMI**

REFLECTION

Spend time taking a long loving look at the world around you.

1. What do you notice? What do you see, smell, hear, feel and taste?
2. What is God showing you right now?
3. How are you experiencing God?

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A person is silhouetted while sitting on a rocky cliff overlooking the ocean. The sun is low in the sky, creating a bright glow and lens flare. The water is dark with white foam from the waves. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

STATION SEVEN

CONTEMPLATION

CONTEMPLATION

“It is always hard to see the purpose in wilderness wanderings until after they are over.”

John Bunyan

"When you go down to the valley, you need to remember what you saw on the mountain, if you are not to lose your way"
-NT Wright

“Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out”
-Alexander Shaia

8 That night, in a field near Bethlehem, there were shepherds watching over their flocks. 9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared in radiant splendor before them, lighting up the field with the blazing glory of God, and the shepherds were terrified! 10 But the angel reassured them, saying, “Don’t be afraid. For I have come to bring you good news, the most joyous news the world has ever heard! And it is for everyone everywhere! 11 For today in Bethlehem a rescuer was born for you. He is the Lord Yahweh, the Messiah. 12 You will recognize him by this miracle sign: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a feeding trough!” 13 Then all at once, a vast number of glorious angels appeared, the very armies of heaven! And they all praised God, singing: 14 “Glory to God in the highest realms of heaven! For there is peace[i] and a good hope given to the sons of men.” 15 When the choir of angels disappeared back to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go! Let’s hurry and find this Word[k] that is born in Bethlehem and see for ourselves what the Lord has revealed to us.” 16 So they ran into the village and found their way to Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in a feeding trough. 17 Upon seeing this miraculous sign, the shepherds recounted what had just happened. 18 Everyone who heard the shepherds’ story was astonished by what they were told. 19 But Mary treasured all these things in her heart and often pondered what they meant.
Luke 2:8-19 The Passion Translation (TPT)

REFLECTION

1. Have I grown through the love of God and His creation?
2. What do I need to change in my life in order to live in unity with God?
3. What commitment must I make regarding prayer, acts of love and spiritual disciplines in my daily life?
4. How do I communicate to others the gifts received during the journey?
5. In order to improve the situation I left behind, what must I do now to live differently, with more hope, serenity and strength?

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STATION EIGHT

THE RETURN HOME

CONTEMPLATION

"I am the sprouting vine and you're my branches. As you live in union with me as your source, fruitfulness will stream from within you"

JOHN 15:5a TPT

One thing I ask of the Lord, one thing I seek: to dwell in the Lord's house all the days of my life, to enjoy the sweetness of the Lord, to seek out his temple.

Psalm 27:4

"Each and every one of us has one obligation, during the bewildered days of our pilgrimage here: the saving of his own soul, and secondarily and incidentally thereby affecting for good such other souls as come under our influence."

-Kathleen Norris

"Because we cannot repair the loss of years away, homecomings are almost always conflicted. We are not longer at „home“ in our former familiar place. And we do not live between two or more cultures, but rather in both. We are neither fully away, nor fully home.

In the pain of this tension, there is a strange blessing, a nudge that helps us to realise the fundamental sojourner status of our human existence. Life moves towards death. And for the Christian, there is the sense that this world as it is now is not our final home. Having made the return, our pilgrim status in the journey of faith becomes even more evident. This reminds us that in some strange way we are too early for heaven and too late for this world."

-Charles Ringma

"HOMECOMING IS THE FINAL, CRITICAL PART OF THE JOURNEY WHERE WE GRADUALLY LEARN HOW TO PUT INTO EFFECT THE CHANGES THAT WERE AWAKENED IN US AS WE WALKED"

-ALEXANDER SHAIK

REFLECTION

One month after returning home reflect on your answers to Station 7.

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UNTIL NEXT TIME

"May the Lord bless you
and protect you.
May the Lord smile on you
and be gracious to you.
May the Lord show you his favor
and give you his peace."

NUMBERS 6:24-26 NEW (NLT)

"Faith is not the clinging to a shrine but an endless
pilgrimage of the heart."

— Abraham Joshua Heschel