

The VINE

"I am the Vine, you are the branches."

John 15:5

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Persistently seeking...and finding

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This Sunday [July 25] we hear another parable from the Gospel of St. Luke. Jesus tells his disciples of a man who, in need of three loaves of bread to feed a sojourner, knocks on the door of his neighbor's house. When his neighbor refuses to even answer his door, Jesus advises the man to simply keep knocking because persistence pays off.

Jesus puts it to us this way: we must keep seeking. Eventually we will find.

The Wednesday night faith sharing group ended its summer series last week by reflecting on the forms of prayer that are central to our Catholic faith and identity. One of these ways too often neglected nowadays: pilgrimage.

The earlier days of our Church saw numerous pilgrimages each year that were well attended and long in miles. Many still exist.

In fact, this Sunday marks the feast day of St. James the Great, one of the apostles who was very close to Jesus, whose remains now rest in an early Christian cemetery beneath the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Annually, thousands of folks take part in a prayerful pilgrimage--called the Way of St. James--to this sacred spot. We might pray for them.

The basic point of any pilgrimage is this: we must turn away from our former life (physically if possible) and seek, with God and one another, to find that which is sure to transform us. The pilgrim accomplishes what Jesus tells his disciples to do in this Sunday's Gospel: "Seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

I'm sure any pilgrim on the Way of St. James today would echo Jesus' reminder in this Sunday's Gospel: seeking takes persistence. But seek we must! Pope John Paul II persistently sought and found on the Way of St. James many times. On the last page of this newsletter you will find a prayer he offered while on the pilgrimage, which outlines a bit of what he hoped to find through prayerful seeking.

We needn't make huge pilgrimages if we can't. The Way of the Cross, a trip to the Carmelite monastery or to St. Mary of the Woods--these are little pilgrimages that our Catholic tradition encourages so that we, too, can physically embark on a journey that will enable us to find God.

Seek and find!





Pope John Paul II's prayer on the Way of St. James

St James!

Behold me here, once again, beside your tomb
which I approach today,
a pilgrim of all the pathways of the earth,
to honour your memory and implore your protection.

I come from luminous and perennial Rome
to you who became a pilgrim,
following the footprints of Christ
and who brought his name and his voice
to this farthest part of the earth.

I come from Peter's side
and, as his successor,
I bring to you,
to you who, with him,
are a pillar of the Church,
the fraternal embrace that traverses centuries
and the song which resounds firm
and apostolic in its catholicity.

With me, St James, there is an immense and youthful flood
which has surged from springs in all the countries of the world.
Here, you have it,
united and still in your presence,
anxious to refresh its faith in the vibrant example of your life.

We come to this blessed threshold in eager pilgrimage.
We come immersed in this great throng
which throughout the centuries
has led people to Compostela
where you are pilgrim and host, apostle and patron.

And we come today to you because we are on a common journey.
We are walking towards the end of a millennium
which we want to close with the seal of Christ.
We are going further still,
to the beginning of a new millennium
which we want to open in the name of God.

(continued on page 3)

Pope John Paul II's prayer on the Way of St. James (continued)

St James,
for this pilgrimage of ours we need
your zeal and courage.
For this reason, to ask them of you, we have come
as far as this "finisterrae" of your apostolic adventures.

Teach us, apostle and friend of Our Lord,
the WAY which leads to him.
Open us, preacher of the lands of Spain,
to the TRUTH you learned from the Master's lips.
Give us, witness of the Gospel,
the strength always to love the LIFE .

Place yourself, patron of pilgrims,
at the head of our Christian youthful pilgrimage.
And just as, in the past,
the peoples walked towards you,
may you be a pilgrim with us when we go to meet all peoples.
With you, St James, Apostle and Pilgrim,
we want to teach the nations of Europe and the world
that Christ is - today and always -
the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE.

Excerpt from an Early Homily Given on the Way of St. James

The way of St. James is fine but narrow, as narrow as the path of salvation
itself.

The path is the shunning of vice, the mortification of the flesh, the increas-
ing of virtue.

If [the pilgrim] was previously a spoliator, he must become an almsgiver; if
he was boastful he must become forever modest; if greedy, generous; if a
fornicator or adulterer, chaste; if drunk, sober.

That is to say that from every sin which he committed before his pilgrim-
age, he must afterwards abstain completely.