

Christ Church Gabriola

2020 Summer Pilgrimage Retreats: *for Times Such as These*



1. Beginning (July)

2. Walking (August)

3. Coming Home (September)

Introduction

What is a Pilgrimage? A pilgrimage is an intentional journey into an experience of unknowing and discomfort for the sake of stripping away preconceived expectations. The Latin root of the word pilgrimage, *peregrini*, means “strange” or “stranger.” The journey to become a pilgrim means becoming a stranger in the service of transformation.¹

Prepare Space/Time

- *Carve out Time: decide on a 2-3 hour block of time, write it into your schedule and honor this commitment you have made to yourself.*
- *Prepare the Space: create a sacred space to begin your pilgrimage. What do you need on your journey? Bring this booklet as your guide . . . there may be other essentials, like a candle, journal, camera (needed for one of the exercises) or other objects that feel meaningful and necessary. Make sure there is room in this space for you to sit in stillness and write any reflections which arise.*
- *Turn off your phone and your computer and bring to the space the retreat materials and necessities.*

Suggested Schedule (Approx. 3 hours)

Adjust the times for your own needs (include all the pieces)

Opening Prayer (15)

*Movements of **Beginning** (60)*

- *Hearing the Call from God*
- *Packing Light*
- *Anoint Yourself for Pilgrimage*
- *Crossing the Threshold*

Lectio Divina and journal any insights (30)

Photographic Pilgrimage (60)

Reflection & Journaling (30)

Join Rev. Karen and others on July 16 at 10am on Zoom to share reflections on our personal retreat experiences.

Opening Prayer

Sit with your eyes closed and feet on the floor. Take a few deep breaths and bring yourself into the present moment. Open yourself to the presence of the Holy Spirit and sit for several minutes, offering gratitude for this day, this time, and naming your intention for this time of retreat.

For a New Beginning ~ John O'Donohue

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,
Where your thoughts never think to wander,
This beginning has been quietly forming,
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.

For a long time it has watched your desire,
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,
Noticing how you willed yourself on,
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.

It watched you play with the seduction of safety
And the gray promises that sameness whispered,
Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,
Wondered would you always live like this.

Then the delight, when your courage kindled,
And out you stepped onto new ground,
Your eyes young again with energy and dream,
A path of plenitude opening before you.

Though your destination is not yet clear
You can trust the promise of this opening;
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning
That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

Movements of Beginning

Hearing the Call from God

The Call The simple fact that you are reading this resource and engaging in a retreat indicates that you have heard something . . . and responded. We often think of a pilgrimage as a physical journey, but even a trip there and back is not a pilgrimage if we are not changed in the process. "There are many reasons we might begin an inner pilgrimage. Perhaps we've experienced a great loss: a job, our health, a dear friend, a sense of identity, financial security, or a marriage."² In addition to individual circumstances, COVID has brought a shift to the world as a whole that has changed the conditions of our lives. "We know we can't return to life as usual. That way is now closed. This is the call to which we must respond. If we say no, it means numbering ourselves and living in denial of this great shifting we've experienced. When we say yes, it means to acknowledge that even our moments of profound sorrow can lead us to renewed vision and life."³

Saying Yes My life has been changed by the use of a single word – "yes." Leaving school at sixteen, having only completed Grade 9, I was untrained and unskilled at anything. I struggled for years: homeless, in dire poverty, lost. Then one day a possibility was presented to me – to be a storyteller – and I said "yes." A journalism career, more than a dozen books and numerous honours later, it's all because of that yes. There are a thousand ways to say "no," "but," "I can't," "it's impossible," "it's too late," but there's only one way to say "yes." With your whole being. When you do that, when you choose that word, it becomes the most spiritual word in the universe . . . And your world can change. ~ **Richard Wagamese**, *Embers*

Innermost Reflection of the Divine 'I Am' (John 14:1-6 As translated fr Aramaic)

Don't let your heart be divided
or weakened because I am going:
Root your confidence and trust
within Sacred Unity,
the Ground and Source of All,
just as you have rooted yourselves
in my trust of the One Reality.

Inside this living, creating reality
of the Parent of the Cosmos,
you will find many way stations
to turn in and rest,
abundant temporary housing
for the growing awareness
of your own divine image –
the reflection of the “I Am” –
to stay awhile
before it journeys further.
If this were not so,
and you only had one chance,
I would have told you.

That is why I’m going ahead,
returning to the Holy One,
creating in my wake
a fusion and infusion
of divine light and consciousness,
a station where you can rest,
an opportunity to follow
my soul on the same journey.

As “I” go, my soul simply
finds its own level,
my divine image rises and moves
toward the first Beginning,
where “Let us make humanity . . .”
is the real life.

The true “I” that you see in me,
the living ideal you hold that
has inspired you with love and devotion,
just reflects your own divine “I Am.”
This reflection is always
traveling to and returning from
the Source of All Being.
Where that “I Am” really is
is where you already are
and can be, consciously.

You already know the way –
you have it in your hand.

Thomas said, “How will we
recognize this level and find
the steps to reach it?”
Jesus replied,
“The ‘I Am’ – your own
innermost reflection of the One –
constructs the path for you.
It shows you one step after another,
tells you which way to turn
when you reach a crossroads
and gives you the energy to
travel further.
No one goes anywhere
to the Source of Creation or otherwise,
if not within and with
this innermost reflection
of the divine ‘I Am.’
this is the same way that
I am going now.” ~ **Neil Douglas-Klotz**, *Blessings of the Cosmos*

What brings you to this pilgrimage?
(pieces of this answer may be easy to name, others may be unclear)

Packing Light

Forgiveness Prayer

If I have harmed anyone, in any way,
either knowingly or unknowingly through my own confusions,
I ask forgiveness
If anyone has harmed me, in any way,
either knowingly or unknowingly through their own confusions,
I forgive them
and if there is a situation I am not yet ready to forgive,
I forgive myself for that.
For all the ways that I harm myself, negate, doubt, belittle myself,
judge or be unkind to myself through my own confusions,
I forgive myself. ~ **Buddhist Prayer**

Wilderness Blessing

Let us say this blessing began
whole and complete upon the page.

And then let us say

that one word loosed itself
and another followed it in turn.

Let us say this blessing started
to shed all it did not need,
that line by line it returned
to the ground from which it came.

Let us say this blessing is not leaving you,
is not abandoning you to the wild
that lies ahead, but that it is loathe
to load you down on this road where
you will need to travel light.

Let us say perhaps this blessing
became the path beneath your feet,
the desert that stretched before you,
the clear sight that finally came.

Let us say that when this blessing
at last came to its end,
all it left behind was bread, wine,
a fleeting flash of wing. ~ **Jan Richardson**, *Circle of Grace*

What have you named as essentials on your journey?
What are the things (tangible and intangible) you need
to lay down for the season ahead?

Anoint Yourself for Pilgrimage

Anointing is a nice way of grounding yourself as you begin. This kind of ritual brings body and spirit together in a moment of yes, marking this movement with intention. Here is one way of anointing: find some kind of oil (like olive, grapeseed or almond) and pour a very small amount (teaspoon) into a little dish. You might want to add an essential oil, like lavender or rose or even frankincense. Choose the scents you are drawn to. Offer the oil a blessing, like “God bless this oil, that it may be a symbol of the inner resources needed for the journey.” Then touch your fingers to the oil and bless the different parts of your body with these words or your own:

Feet ~ bless your feet, asking that they might carry you forward in this season to new possibilities

Hands ~ bless your hands, asking that they might help you to give form to creative expressions

Heart ~ bless your heart, asking that it be open to wonder and numinous moments

Throat ~ bless your throat, asking that you gain courage to speak your truth

Lips ~ bless your lips, asking that you take in that which is most nourishing

Forehead ~ bless your forehead, asking that your thoughts, intuition and dreams help guide you ~ **Christine Valters Paintner**, *The Soul of a Pilgrim*

1 Samuel 16:11-13 (NRSV)

Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Are all your sons here?’ And he said, ‘There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.’ And Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.’ He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, ‘Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.’ Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.

How does it feel to begin with anointing? Is it familiar or unfamiliar?
Is there anything you need to change or add to this ritual?

Crossing the Threshold

Passageways Life is a series of passageways we choose largely on faith and a healthy dose of hope. We hope that the hallway of our choosing leads us to magic: the inexplicable, the sudden, the uncontained. Not so that we can capture it, hold it, make it our own – but just so that we can feel it, even for an instant. Feel it and know the truth that the universe itself is magic. Hope that by our believing, our blind trust, our inherent innocence, someday, sometime, somewhere, that magic will become us, even fleetingly, and we touch the face of God. ~ **Richard Wagamese**, *Embers*

I long for You so much I have even begun to travel where I have never been before. – **Hafiz**, *The Subject Tonight is Love*

A voice comes to your soul saying, Lift your foot, Cross over. Move into emptiness of question and answer and question. – **Rumi**, *The Glance*

A Blessing The God who weaves the sun and the moon, the sky and the earth, is the very same God who knit you together in your mother's womb. The God who brings new stars to birth in far-off galaxies is the same God who brought you to birth and placed you at your mother's breast. Enter this day with confidence: as surely as the sun, as certain as the moon, as solid as the earth, you have a place within God's unfolding grace. ~ **Sam Hamilton-Poore**, *Earth Gospel*

What is it like for you to finally begin?
How long have you been preparing?

Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading)

Whether with a written text or with the sacred text of our own lives, *Lectio* invites us to approach the text not as a map that will precisely show us our path but rather as a doorway into the presence of the living God who goes with us and prepares a way that we cannot always see. *Lectio* cultivates in us an ability to be surprised by the Word, to be open to it, to give up our assumptions about what it means or what shape it may take. This can be risky, because in order to truly encounter the God who dwells in the landscape of the text and of our own lives, we have to give up the belief that we know the lay of the land.⁴

Genesis 12:1-5 (NRSV)

Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'⁴ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan.

First Reading – Lectio: Settling and Grounding

Begin by finding a comfortable position where you can remain alert and yet also relax your body. Bring your attention to your breath and allow a few moments to become centered. If you find yourself distracted at any time, gently return to the rhythm of your breath as an anchor for your awareness. Allow yourself to settle into this moment and become fully present. Read the scripture passage above once or twice through slowly and listen for a word or phrase that feel significant right now or is capturing your attention even if you don't know why. Gently repeat this word to yourself in the silence.

Second Reading – Meditatio: Savouring and Stirring

Read the text again and then allow the word or phrase which caught your attention in the first movement to spark your imagination. Savour the word or phrase with all of your senses, notice what smells, sounds, tastes, sights, and feelings are evoked. Then listen for what images, feelings, and memories are stirring, welcoming them in, and then savouring and resting into this experience.

Third Reading – Oratio: Summoning and Serving

Read the text a third time and then listen for an invitation rising up from your experience of prayer so far. Considering the word or phrase and what it has evoked for you in memory, image, or feeling, what is the invitation? This invitation may be a summons toward a new awareness or action.

Fourth Reading – Contemplatio: Slowing and Stilling

Move into a time for simply resting in God and allowing your heart to fill with gratitude for God's presence in this time of prayer. Slow your thoughts even further and sink into the experience of stillness. Rest in the presence of God and allow yourself to simply be. Rest here for several minutes. Return to your breath if you find yourself distracted.

Reflection and Journaling – Transitioning

Gently connect with your breath again and slowly bring your awareness back to the room moving from inner experience to outer experience. Give yourself some time of transition between these movements of contemplative depth and your every day life. Consider taking a few minutes to journal about what you experienced in your prayer.⁵

Photographic Pilgrimage

Begin: Find a place on Gabriola where it feels right to begin and take a contemplative walk, bringing a camera with you (you might even have one on your phone). Breathe deeply as you walk, moving your awareness down to your heart center. Settle into this moment, releasing any thoughts or expectations. Perhaps keep the theme of beginning in your mind as you walk.

Noticing: Pay attention for things around you that capture your attention. What calls to you? What do you notice? Make space within for images, feelings, and memories to stir. How does your body respond? What are you noticing inside in response to this experience? How does the prayer stirring in you meet you in this particular moment of your life?

Images as Gifts: Instead of “taking a picture” of the things you notice, shift your perspective to receiving this image as a gift. As you look through the camera lens, explore how gazing at this moment supports you in seeing it more deeply. If you notice yourself grasping, put the camera down, but if the lens is helping you to see this moment from different perspectives, then the camera can be a great gift.

Returning: When your walk feels complete, re-enter the world by returning home to a place of quiet. Release all of the words, images, and ideas. Allow yourself some time for silence and stillness. Breathe gratitude in and out. Spend some time softly gazing on the photos you received in this journey. See if they have anything to say to you about your own calling to pilgrimage. Spend some time journaling with the images. Sometimes it can be helpful to dialogue with them, asking what wisdom they have to offer you.⁶

Reflection & Journaling:

Beginning is movement one of three on this pilgrimage journey. Journal about what has come up for you in this particular beginning. What has shifted for you? What are you looking forward to? Can you name any areas of discomfort? Is there a practice you’ve learned here or another practice you can continue through the month of July? I wonder what gifts might be awaiting you within that practice.

A Blessing

Lay down your map and compass,
and those dog-eared travel guides.
Rest your weary eyes from so much looking,
your tired feet from so much wandering,
your aching heart from so much hoping.

Lay down on the soft green grass
wet with morning dew, and watch as
the tree heavy with pendulous pears
bends her long branches toward you,
offering you perfection in every sweet bite.

Give up the weight of knowing,
for the reverence of quiet attention
and curiosity, for the delight of
juice that runs in generous streams
down your chin. ~ Christine Valters Paintner

¹ Valters Paintner, Christine. *The Soul of a Pilgrim* (Notre Dame: Sorin Books, 2015) p. 1-2.

² Valters Paintner, 12.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Richardson, Jan. *In the Sanctuary of Women* (Nashville: Upper Room, 2010) p. 128.

⁵ Valters Paintner, 23-24.

⁶ Valters Paintner, 29-30.