

Teaching Pilgrims to Walk

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Abstract: This article follows the creation and implementation of a Christian theological seminary course, "The Education of Christian Pilgrims," in which the purpose was to teach students to teach members of a church to be and become a consciously "pilgrim Church." This article will cover the genesis of the course, creating a syllabus for this course, the actual pilgrimage which the students and professor went on at the conclusion of the course, and modifications to the course.

The Problem:

The genesis of the course, "The Education of Pilgrims" began with two problems that emerged while I was teaching another graduate course on human developmental psychological theories in Christian education at Duke Divinity School, Duke University. The first problem arose when offering a postmodern critique of the secular theories of human developmental psychologies: the focus on the autonomous individual who is caught up in a mind-centered way of being, growing along a series of foundational, universal pre-set stages, in which the theories made little use of the body, let alone spirit, and thus fragmenting the human person. I was looking for a constructive alternative to these social scientific theories that was more theologically informed and focused on the individual as a member of a faith community, in which the body and spirit, as well as mind, are what grows, in ways that may or

may not fit the larger society's norms. The idea of Christian pilgrimage as an alternative view kept returning as I read the theme of "passageway" and "road" in various theorist's constructions of human development.

The second problem arose from the pedagogy of the course itself. I lectured, provided small group discussions, showed a video here and there, and assigned journaling and group projects to be conducted outside of class, but the students' attention on matters of growth and change in their own life seemed disconnected from the passionate narratives of pilgrims' lives we were reading. Reading weekly journals from the various classes, revealed the tentative, fragile connection between the fabric of the students' lives as pilgrims, and the material being read, lectured about, and studied in the course presented as ideas about the theology, anthropology, and sociological influence of Christian pilgrims. The students were adroit at picking apart the theological nuances of the pilgrimage narratives, quick to discuss the possible heretical points in various book passages. Yet the students couldn't-or didn't want to-see the connection between the narratives we were reading and their life narratives as Christian pilgrims.

The remedy to this problem was not through longer reading lists and investigatory studies in a library, centered upon the broad theme of Christian pilgrimage. I was intrigued with expanding my resources from reading lists and videos, to include

photographs and other visual and expressive arts on pilgrimage, and also with teaching the course itself differently. I hoped to teach the students that they are pilgrims and that the narratives we were reading were stories of people more like us than unlike us, because these were other pilgrims with whom we shared the same goal. Working out of the assumption that Christians are, as Christ's followers, literally and figuratively on a pilgrimage to the kingdom of God, I came to understand that the education of Christian pilgrims might best be taught by immersing the students in the practice of a pilgrimage by going on a pilgrimage. I, myself, am on a pilgrimage as a teacher, a minister, a parent...as a Christian. What would it look like to teach a course on pilgrimage while embarking on a pilgrimage with students in which I, the professor, might be a facilitator a few "steps" ahead of the students, but with the perspective that we are all on pilgrimage as Christ's pilgrim people, open to the surprises that we, students and teacher alike, will find along the way? It would mean practicing with renewed vigor Paulo Freire's social praxis, community-centered approach of teaching with students rather than the one-way, student-centered approach of students receiving an education from the professor.

The Idea:

The resolution to both problems came from an experience of pilgrimage in northern New Mexico. Over a period of six days, and over one-hundred miles, I walked with a group of thirty other

pilgrims--*peregrinos*--behind a six foot cross with a crucifix of Jesus on it, from Costilla, New Mexico, to El Santuario de Chimayo. As a white, male, Protestant, I learned much in a short span of time walking with Hispanic-Americans and Native American, Roman Catholic men. The way I was mentored as a pilgrim and the growth I experienced among young and old men convinced me of the power of the pilgrimage as a place, a community of people, and an activity of body, mind, and spirit that encouraged much growth among the pilgrims.

What did I learn? Christian pilgrimage incorporates a communal sense of ourselves as we are members of Christ's body; pilgrimage focuses on the body as well as mind and spirit; pilgrimage as a Christian may be different for each person, depending upon the needs, interests, and desires of the pilgrim, and upon the accommodating nature of the Christian community; and Christian pilgrimage clearly assumes that the Holy Spirit is active in the earthly sojourn of Christians.

Participating in a pilgrimage encouraged me to pursue a more scholarly study of the background of pilgrimages. I came to appreciate how much the word "pilgrim" denotes a common concept used in many religions and cultural contexts around the world. One example is the Muslim traditional trek to Mecca and the prescribed rituals of the Hajj. In the Japanese Shinto tradition, the garden is a place of pilgrimage, while others choose to pursue the climb to Mt. Kamji in Japan (Westwood, 1997,

148, 159). Pilgrimage is also a phrase used broadly in modern American vernacular, e.g., the pilgrimage to Elvis' Graceland mansion in Tennessee, people cruising Highway 66 in the American west, and movies of John Wayne with his toss of the phrase, "Howdy, Pilgrim."

I've come to appreciate that what distinguishes these pilgrimages from one another is the genesis and the destination of the journey, the purpose of the pilgrimage or pilgrim, the geographical context, the religious faith of the pilgrims, the span of time, the necessary gestures performed on the pilgrimage, and the people and unexpected events pilgrims meet along the way.

As human developmental theorists focused on growth, one of the core themes of Christian pilgrimage is a growing understanding of what one believes: Christian pilgrimage holds the possibility of growth as insight into the fabric of the richly textured life in the body of Christ itself. For some, visiting the religious sites in the Holy Land may be a catalyst for growth as a person places his or her life-story in the very place where the stories of Jesus weeping or Paul preaching to the masses were first lived and then told. Others understand that pilgrimage in the Christian faith means reading the Psalms daily, listening to the prophets, walking with the Gospel, moving at one's own pace while trying to live the Gospel. All of these practices give persons-as-pilgrims reason enough to pause and examine their hearts. For still others, pilgrimage is a time to

prepare oneself for leaving home, family, or occupation in order to somehow pay penance for one's sinful ways on earth as one prepares for being swept up into heaven's gates. John Bunyan's "Pilgrim" in A Pilgrim's Progress, hoped for absolution and a home in God's kingdom, a hope that was shared by my students.

In the medieval Christian church, the growth of hope that was fostered along the pilgrim's way was in the possibility of Incarnation, the hope of witnessing the physical presence of Christ in this time and place. Victor and Edith Turner note that pilgrims were drawn not only to the Holy Land and Rome, but to places closer to where they lived, where some had visions of healing, like Lourdes in France, or where the relics of the saintly martyrs of the Church are preserved, such as Santiago de Compostela in Spain. The cathedrals and churches where these relics were deposited were considered shrines; as shrines they were often perceived as a "hot-line" to God (Turner and Turner, 1978).

While pilgrimage remains an important practice in the Roman Catholic Church, that is not the case for many mainline Protestant Christians. That is why pilgrimage is all mystery for many of my Protestant students because it is not part of the Protestant tradition's core practices. This is due, in large part, to Martin Luther who declared: "All pilgrimages should be stopped. There is no good in them: no commandment enjoins them, no obedience attaches to them. Rather do these pilgrimages give

countless occasions to commit sin and to despise God's commandments" (Davies, 1988, 98-99). Luther understood pilgrimages as an extension of the theology of "good works" or "works righteousness," an attempt to earn God's grace through one's good works, rather than through faith, learning to accept the free gift of God's salvific love. The sale of indulgences along the pilgrimage routes also did not win Luther's heart. Instead, Luther believed that what pilgrims to Rome, Jerusalem, and Santiago de Compostela found riveting, could also be found when one diligently read psalms, the prophets, the Gospel, and Paul's letters, pausing to reflect upon the circumstances of one's own sojourn wherever the one might be.

Reflection on the historic practices of Christian pilgrimage helped me shape a Christian education course in three ways. First, the course re-claimed the practice or performance of pilgrimage, thereby providing students a new framework for understanding all the intricate, challenging changes in the breadth of one's entire life today as part of their pilgrimage. Pilgrimage offers students a perspective that one's life is part of a larger gathering than one's immediate context: our inherited narrative began before we came into the world. Furthermore, our narrative continues to unfold even after death in the kingdom of God.

Christian pilgrimage is a communal activity, in which we share a common narrative with the other members of the body of

Christ. Personal stories of growth are inextricably connected with the story of other Christians and Christ's story. Education of Christians in the life of the Church is enhanced if we consider ourselves on an earthly pilgrimage as members of Christ's body, much like John Bunyan's "Pilgrim" in Pilgrim's Progress, who is on his way to the "Celestial City" from the "City of Destruction." In other words, as a teacher in the body of Christ I hope to teach Christians to learn to live life as a pilgrim in the midst of the unexpected course of life events, rather than telling them about what they might expect away from the scene of actual transformation and growth. This demands a new kind of pedagogy: immersing the teacher and students alike in the literal and figurative practices of being on a pilgrimage towards God's kingdom. With pilgrimage as both a way to understand education, and as an education in the ways of God's people, Christian education itself is thereby more than a separate academic field, separate from biblical studies, theology, or history, is more than learning a variety of theories and pedagogical tools, and is more than an intellectual pursuit.

It is teaching a performance of gestures which incorporate practices that involve the physical body as well as the mind and spirit, and thus is also a spiritual journey as we pray for continual guidance by the Holy Spirit. The class thereby understands that Christian education--or the education of Christians--is to involve a literal coming together of God's

people, moving together as Christ's body upon the pilgrim's road in this time and this place, with God's kingdom as our common destination.

The Decision and the First Step:

To sum up a lengthy course proposal, the goal of this Christian education course was to lead students in learning the craft of teaching Christians about what Benedictine sister Joan Chittister refers to as the "Jesus-life" as pilgrims on a pilgrimage in and as the body of Christ, to the kingdom of God. The problem is that often times educating Christians has been reduced to teaching and learning in a certain place, building, and classroom, with the accoutrements of the modern secular classroom, including video monitor, a black or white board, or power point, computer generated projectors for teaching purposes.

This approach has kept many "land locked," leading us to forget that what we are learning is more than mere rhetoric or metaphorical language games, but the necessary skills or gestures that we may need to employ as people on the move, walking with Jesus Christ, as urged to do so by the Holy Spirit. Thus an assumption about teaching is that inherent in being Christians is that we will be moved by the Holy Spirit, whether one is being comforted or made uncomfortable, and whether one's pilgrimage is an interior journey of the Benedictine or a physical moving. In other words, the course is intended to teach students to consider both the rhetoric and the practice of Christian pilgrimage as a

way of educating Christians today.

The pedagogical strategy for reaching the above goal includes reading carefully and patiently a series of Christian pilgrimage narratives. With the intent of immersing students in the stories of pilgrims, I chose randomly a series of readings, but read them in chronological order, beginning with the fourth century diary of Egeria's Travels, William Dalrymple's tale of re-tracing the sixth century traveler John Moschos and his pupil Sophronius the Sophist in From the Holy Mount, and The Age of Bede and Bede's account of the life of Sts. Aidan and Cuthbert from the seventh century; Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, and the nineteenth century Russian tale, A Way of a Pilgrim. We also viewed some movies on video-tapes. We listen to the discourse between characters on pilgrimage, develop the plot of a pilgrimage itself, and discuss the rich themes of Christian pilgrimage. Students gain an intellectual grounding and share understanding of the general characteristics of many Christian pilgrimages, both in the past, the present, and its portent for the future.

The first time in teaching the course was something like this: The pedagogy at the beginning of the course was that common to a graduate student academic seminar: five white male students met once a week in a small classroom around a common table, with assignments of reading an essay or chapter in a book on the subject of Christian pilgrimage, with discussions led by either

the professor or one of the students, with a final paper on "Christian Education and Christian Pilgrimage."

In teaching with this strategy of each individual reading a text silently before coming to the seminar, ready to verbally discuss it in the same room, around the same table, at the same hour during each week, I found that while we were learning the intellectual history, biblical knowledge, and theological nuances of Christian pilgrimage, it was not necessarily affecting the very lives of the students in any tangible or concrete ways. While these third year Divinity and Th.M. students appreciated the stories we were reading, they were reading them as historical texts and not as stories of living saints. Students thought that these historical texts had little to do or learn from in confronting complex issues in our modern lives. Furthermore, we were reading them not as a community, sharing our insights in a collaborative manner, but as individuals who were competing with one another to win the teacher's praise. Lastly, while our intellectual curiosities were peaked, the course remained but one course amid a busy schedule in a theological seminary.

After a few weeks of classes, I began to incorporate what I call an "immersion approach" to educating Christians. By immersion approach I mean a pedagogical strategy where one teaches a practice or gesture in a specific context by showing the student the gestured practices by using the very living context--a physical place, space, people, current events, and

time--and the gestures associated with the thriving, active life in the context. This is more involved than a course in which one component is "hands-on," or part of a sequence of "experiential learning," e.g., incorporating a field education experience in a seminary classroom outside the field education site. Rather, I propose that, like Christian baptism, in the immersion approach teacher and students alike are totally immersed, submerged, covered over completely by the active, life-sustaining context itself. In turn, one profoundly absorbs the life in the living context from being in the very nexus of a gesture-filled context, the intricate performances of a culture, like the body of Christ on pilgrimage. All learning, all knowing is action, with little if no luxury of time or space for passive reflection, for any reflection itself is movement of mind, body, and spirit; reflection is an action, e.g., reflecting on pilgrimage is a part of the pilgrimage itself, and not set apart from it.

For an example of an immersion approach with teaching Christian pilgrimage, I incorporated some of the unique performance of gestures which I discovered to be transformative of my life in walking through northern New Mexico, to see if this would change how we were reading and understanding these texts, from reading them for their intellectual merit as individuals, to reading and absorbing them with our mind, body, and spirit as a community of Christian pilgrims. This would include taking the students on an actual pilgrimage so that they would have a

physical, emotional, communal, and spiritual understanding of Christian pilgrimage itself, hoping that they would understand themselves to be pilgrims of Christ at the end of the course.

I began to apply some of the immersion pedagogical practices I learned from the pilgrimage in New Mexico to the seminary course. First, students began each weekly session by leading and participating corporately in a written morning prayer, adapted from the longer morning prayer provided by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, New Mexico, for the pilgrimage to Chimayo. Morning prayer included such things as a reading of Psalms, the recitation of the Canticle of Zechariah, and praying in unison the Lord's Prayer.

Second, because it was an early morning course, students were responsible for bringing in snack or breakfast food for the other students in the course. They brought in everything from bagels and coffee, to sweet rolls and orange juice. The food was usually set in the middle of the large common table. We discovered together that the sharing of food, passing it around the table, and conversations that ensued helped build relationships and new friendships among the students in the course. Eating together weekly became an integral part of becoming more like a community of pilgrims, and less like a academic class of a teacher and students. Though I was still the mentor, the facilitator of the class on pilgrimage, there was a slight shift in the power dynamic between us as we became more

teacher with student through the sharing of food, and each other's stories.

Third, we read primary pilgrimage narratives rather than secondary sources about pilgrimage, including with the partial list suggested above: Dorothy Day's Long Loneliness; George MacDonald's The Golden Key; T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets; Belden Lane's Solace in Fierce Landscapes; and the Clifts' The Archetype of Pilgrimage. The movies on video that we watched included Central Station, a Brazilian film about a woman's pilgrimage with a young boy to his true home. As we discussed these readings in class, I instructed the students to join me in relating these stories to our modern lives, out of the belief that how these pilgrims learned to be pilgrims may be a similar educational process for our lives as well.

This connection between the reading and our lives was fostered by the weekly journals each kept throughout the course.

In one part of a weekly journal I asked the students to react to the reading or movie we just read or watched. The second part of the journal was to keep track of our own pilgrimage within the course in light of the readings for each week. I asked the students to reflect on ways the rhetoric and practice of pilgrimage was starting to frame their life stories. The hope was that in retrospect we would each look back on these journals and see in what ways the stories of people's lives we read were shaping or determining our modern lives as Christ's followers, as

we were slowly becoming pilgrims ourselves. Throughout the semester, students started to refer to themselves as "pilgrims," who are on a specific trek, following Christ.

Fifth, while the students in the course met at first in one of the classrooms in the Divinity School building of Duke University itself, I began to take the students to other parts of the University. This started because our classroom was being used one morning for a previously scheduled event at the Divinity School. But the dislocation and novelty of discussing the readings in a small coffee bar at the student center at Duke University gave an unplanned feeling of being on pilgrimage ourselves. It only made sense since movement is inherent in the performance or practice of pilgrimage. We suddenly felt like people on the move. From this incident, we branched out to other places around the Durham, North Carolina area, including a student's town-house and a local diner.

Moving around helped the students feel as if they were pilgrims in a way, by not meeting in the same place twice in the semester and praying morning prayers and discussing the issues of Christian pilgrimage in very public places, like a coffee bar or diner, or in a more personal place, like a home. The ritual of eating together, morning prayers, traveling in cars to various locales, walking together, and heated, heart-felt, and joyous discussions in which we connected our life pilgrimages to the pilgrim's stories we were reading became the familiar and stable

elements of the class that was always on the edge of the unexpected.

The culmination of the course was not the final term paper per se, but a class project: the students and I went on a two day pilgrimage from Snow Camp to Durham, North Carolina, a distance of twenty-eight miles. The pilgrimage became the high point of the course as we all learned to expect the unexpected lessons of life, thanks to God's Spirit who taught us much about ourselves and our community. It was on the pilgrimage that the readings, the movies, and the narratives of the students came together and the students' and professor's lives were changed forever.

The Pilgrimage

In the following descriptive narrative, I will show in what ways the students and the professor incorporated readings and theological lessons from the course, as well as moments along the way in which our bodies were marked, and the unexpected moments that occurred along this two-day pilgrimage that made us both depend upon the Holy Spirit, and come closer together as a community of pilgrims:

9:00 A.M., Thursday, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. We gather together at the church where we will sleep this evening. The "Blessing of the Pilgrims on their Departure" is read before we leave on the pilgrimage itself:

Brothers and sisters, as we set out, we should remind ourselves of the reasons for our resolve to go on this holy

pilgrimage. The place we intend to visit is a monument to the devotion of the people of God. They have gone there in great numbers to be strengthened in the Christian way of life and to become more determined to devote themselves to the works of charity.

Most of our luggage and sleeping bags are left in the sanctuary area of the church, along with the evening meal preparations in the church's kitchen, as we would be stopping here for the evening before heading into Durham. We took a student's minivan to a United Methodist Church in Snow Camp, a few miles northwest from Chapel Hill.

9:30 A.M.: We begin this twenty-eight mile trek with unusually warm weather for December. Like the pilgrimage to Chimayo, we walked in single file along the roadside, alternating among the six of us the task of holding the six foot cross of Christ made from branches that fell from a large oak tree. We chose the cross as a symbol for us to remember and the public to know we were on a Christian pilgrimage. Every thirty minutes the group either spent time in silent contemplation, or talking among ourselves. Every hour we would stop just to sit and rest.

12:00 Noon: We stopped for lunch along the roadside. We ate sandwiches, along with some trail mix, sipping from the bottles of water we had brought along with us. This was all we needed for the time being. The camaraderie among the pilgrims was genial, due in large part to having been in class together for

fifteen weeks. We still had no idea of what to expect during these two days.

The first encounter with the unexpected was when a deputy sheriff stopped us abruptly. The deputy sheriff said there had been a call placed by one of the homeowners who lived along the roadway because they were suspicious of six young white men walking with a cross in this largely African American neighborhood. It was only then that it dawned on me that a cross being carried so prominently in this part of the United States usually had to do with racist, Ku Klux Klan activities. Carrying a cross in northern New Mexico was not as unusual or politically charged as carrying a cross in North Carolina, with a disturbing history of burning crosses on people's lawns late at night over the issues of race. The action of carrying the cross brought forth thought-provoking, heart-wrenching challenges.

I entered the sheriff's car where the deputy sheriff asked about the purpose of the walk with the cross. He asked if I had a parade license or permit, and told him no. I also assured him that we weren't parading or protesting anything, but on a Christian pilgrimage as a class project on pilgrimage. He jotted down my name, name of the place where I worked, my Dean's name, and home phone number. The sheriff told me he did not remember a time when there was a group of Christian pilgrims walking this particular road.

The other pilgrims and I talked about this encounter, not

sure if we were being checked out for infringement of church and state issues. A connection between the readings and our lives and this pilgrimage was made as the students made reference to the civil rights marches of the 1960s and the civil disobedience of Dorothy Day that we read about in class. We were genuinely surprised that we could have been seen as people having anything to do with the Klan. Yet this wouldn't be the only time that the racial tension of the Southeastern part of this country and Christian pilgrimage would confront each other during this trek. 3:00 P.M. We walked along Franklin Street in Chapel Hill, which is the main thoroughfare for the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. It is not a street unaccustomed to seeing protesters for one cause or another, displays of great exuberance when the a University's sports team wins, or other cultural public fads. Some University students, faculty, and staff, townspeople and tourists, adults and children pointed at us as we walked silently along on the sidewalk with our six foot cross. Now and then someone would wave at us; another person stopped and genuflected in front of the cross as we walked by; yet others would give us the "peace" sign or reached out to shake our hands.

In the city block, the unexpected confronted us again: three men, all African-American, older, holding a small white box in one hand, on which was written the message that they were homeless and hungry, and that they needed money for the coming evening. "Have any spare change, mister?" said one of the

beggars to the pilgrim holding the cross in the front of the line. The student holding the cross stopped in his tracks, and we stopped with him. "What do we do?" asked the befuddled student to the rest of us in the group. A chorus of "I don't know," lasted a long minute while the people begging waited patiently, smiling at us, watching silently as we tried to figure out what we were going to do. Then the student holding the cross looked at the cross itself, and it dawned on him that he should do what Jesus would do in this situation: engage the men in conversation, listen to what they wanted, and probably give some money to them as well. Each one of us dug into our pockets, put some money in each person's box, and spoke a few words.

The importance of this unexpected lesson was lost on no one. I was surprised that it took such a long time for these students--all of whom were in their third or fourth year of seminary studies--to figure out what should be done in this situation. While I wanted to tell them what to do, I chose instead for them to learn from this experience. It was a "teaching moment" in which the unplanned and unpredictable provided a wealth of educational opportunities of the mind, body, and spirit.

I was equally surprised at the unanimity of the generous response as we all placed coins and dollar bills into their boxes. We each said something like "Have a good day," or something rather unremarkable as we left, unable to figure out

what to say as a response to the magnanimous lesson given to us this day. The Presbyterian Church (USA) where we were staying overnight was only two miles from this event, giving us plenty of time to reflect and discuss being stopped by the deputy sheriff and meeting those who are hungry and homeless "pilgrims."

On the way to the church we talked about one of the theological virtues learned along this pilgrimage, that these men were--for us--Christ, as we learned to perform the gestures of Scripture of Matthew 25:36, 40: "I was hungry and you gave me food...whatever you do to the least of these in my family you do to me"(NRSV). Again, students made the connection between the readings and the unplanned events along the pilgrimage. Drawing from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress the students talked about how, like "Christian," we meet people along the way who provide unplanned lessons to learn from as we actively exegeted the Gospel of Matthew contextually and ecclesiologically. We were struggling with the passage of Scripture with more than our intellectual gifts but with our very lives, from the time and place where we were standing, as we faced those who were hungry and homeless and we responded to the request, by giving money to those who were begging. We did so against the claims of some in society that this money might not be spent for food or housing. Our gestures were tied--directly or indirectly--to the Gospel according to Matthew in the very context of Franklin Street.

Moreover, I observed that the students were trusting each

other more readily as they all grappled with the text not as individuals but as a community of pilgrims who had spent all semester reading various pilgrimage narratives and sharing aspects of our personal lives openly with one another. We gave money as a group, not as individuals, and then discussed what we encountered in giving money to those who are poor.

6:00 P.M. Much of the discussion continued that evening while we were preparing, eating, and cleaning up after dinner. I observed students referring to other readings from their theological studies as we discussed whether or not there were matters that focused on "church versus state" in the deputy sheriff's inquiry.

We wondered aloud what the men were doing with the money we gave them that day. We discussed the power the teacher exercised in letting them learn from the experience itself. We also discussed the power of the cross of Christ in this southeastern American culture versus the southwest Catholic culture of New Mexico. We reflected upon the power inherent in being white men walking with the cross in this time and place, and how "symbolically" charged is the cross of Christ, with many different interpretations. Such unpredictable learning went beyond the controlled behavioral objectives of many syllabi I had written in my lifetime as a teacher and professor.

Pulling sleeping bags and pads together in the middle of the church's sanctuary, one of the students asked if we could spend the rest of the evening sharing our Canterbury Tales with one

another. Chaucer's "dare" to tell a good story about our lives while on the pilgrimage was the agenda for the evening. I observed how pilgrimage narrative and personal lives met each other in that moment. One by one we shared some of the events that revealed the lessons we had learned from life. Each narrative went on for fifteen minutes, after which group members responded with questions. Each story was particular to the person, the only ground rule was that it be truthful and be about one's own life. Even in the sharing of our lives, each man became more vulnerable as we each shared intimate stories with others. We were continually being shaped into being more like a community.

7:00 A.M. Friday morning: After wrapping up sleeping bags and pads, eating breakfast, and cleaning up, we then started on the trek to Durham along a major highway. We were to be met at twelve noon for lunch with Father David of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Durham, our destination for our trek. We had walked sixteen miles the first day, leaving twelve miles this day. During the morning traffic rush there were many stares and people pointing fingers at us. The weather was warm with no rain.

We turned off the major highway onto a secondary road. There we were stopped by two young African American men in an old white Buick Lesabre sedan. The passenger in the car rolled down his window and yelled: "What are you doing with the cross?" When

I told him it was a class project, he wanted to know which class for what school. Satisfied with my answer, the driver made a U-turn in the road and drove away quickly. Racism came to the fore again as we carried the cross in this Klan-shrouded terrain. Six white guys with a tall cross walking through this part of the country, where African Americans have been lynched by some misguided religious zealots, were not a comforting presence. I observed that we were immersed in a story of racism that preceded our pilgrimage this day.

We continued to walk on the crumbling roadway to Durham with the same schedule that we practiced the day before: alternating times of quiet with times of talking, along with a break to sit and eat once an hour. When we reached the sixth mile, one of the students said that a foot and knee pain that he experienced the day before was getting worse. A mile later, this student was unable to walk. The progress of the pilgrimage was slowing down.

A few more yards and we ground to a halt and talked about what we were going to do. Quoting the theme from the movie White Squall which we saw in this class, we struggled with the reality of the statement from the movie: "Where we go one, we go all." We decided, as a group, that one person would get his car at the end of the pilgrimage, go pick up the student who was no longer able to walk, while the rest of us moved on to the Catholic Church.

12:00 Noon: We arrived at the Catholic Church, and the

hospitality of Father David. Fr. David pulled together enough food for the gathering from the church's parish house kitchen, and we were all fed well. The ailing student and driver joined us. Around the table we shared with Father David many stories of the experiences which we had had on this pilgrimage so far, amazed at all that we had experienced, knowing that the full impact of the experience wouldn't be felt right away, but many days, months, and years later. Even in this small exercise we were obviously not the same group of people who had left a day earlier: we were pilgrims.

Something had happened: we had become a community at the end of the semester, having shared together in a set of stories in these two days in ways that could never be repeated. Fr. David then led us all to the sanctuary of the Church where he began this time of closure with the "Blessing of Pilgrims After Their Return":

Our pilgrimage has been a privileged period of graced given us by God. We who have come in trust to this holy place are moved with a new resolve to be renewed in heart. The sanctuaries that we have visited are a sign of the house not built with hands, namely, the body of Christ, in which we are the living stones built upon Christ, the cornerstone. Our hunger and thirst satiated, the pilgrims sat in a circle in a small space in the front of the sanctuary. We each reflected upon the ways our lives were impacted in less than forty-eight

hours: bearing witness to Christ, we experienced the racism of the South; we met poverty face-to-face; we reflected anew upon the course's readings as we added our own stories to Canterbury Tales; and we were supportive of one another when some people were most weak and vulnerable, emotionally as well as physically.

We became a gathering of pilgrims. The pilgrimage was over.

The Pilgrimage Continues:

In the Rule of St. Benedict, it is written that those who master all aspects of the Rule are only at the beginning of the journey of living the Rule (Meisel and del Mastro, 1975, ch. 73). The same is true about teaching the course on pilgrimage. Though I have been on pilgrimage, led a course on pilgrimage, taught pilgrimage in small weekend seminars at other seminaries, there is a heightened sense of "expecting the unexpected" and being on the cusp of something new.

Preparing to teach the course again for another semester, I am at the beginning of something new. Most of the practices used in the first time I taught the course I would do again, like beginning each session with morning or evening prayer, reading many of the same pilgrimage narratives, and maintaining a weekly journal with the students, as well as requiring a final project.

There is a need for an intellectual engagement with the historic and evolving practices of Christian pilgrimage because one confronts a plethora of pilgrimage "kitsch" or the language of "journey" in society. Furthermore, the "capstone" of the course

will be a pilgrimage itself in order to engage and embody the rhetoric of pilgrimage in the students' very life.

There are things I will do differently when I teach it again. First, I will begin the course in the Divinity School building, but each session afterwards will be in a different, pre-arranged locale that is thematically associated with the book being read. For example, we will discuss the life of the Desert Fathers from Belden Lane's The Solace of Fierce Landscapes in the Durham Rape Crisis Center; a discussion of Pilgrim at Tinker Creek will take place after making a hike deep into the greenery of Duke Forest; and a Seder feast will be shared after reading Tom Wright's pilgrimage narrative to Jerusalem in The Way of the Lord. Still reading the books in chronological order, but by meeting in these various locales which are related to the themes represented by the writers of these books, I hope to teach students to learn from, respond to, and live in the unexpected ways that the readings, the places where we meet, and the people we engage in conversation with along the way are all part of the rich text of Christian life as Christian pilgrimage.

I also expect the students to read these narratives with an eye on how the people in these stories became pilgrims themselves, and what they learned from their pilgrimage in life.

Each story is as different as each person who finds him or herself a pilgrim, so there is a great resource and support for pilgrimage in these resources.

Second, the pilgrimage at the end of the course will be either to a Benedictine monastery or spiritual retreat center near the Divinity School. One of the explicit needs of the previous group of pilgrims was to end the pilgrimage at a place that was removed from the rest of their many studies, life with family, and all the other demands upon life in general. Pilgrimage becomes a time to disentangle our lives from the many other demands so we can concentrate or focus on the way of the pilgrim. The concluding time of retreat will give students and professor a chance to clarify the pilgrimage practices they need to adopt in the academy and a church.

Third, students will have the option of working on a final project in small groups. The kind of camaraderie that often occurs in this pilgrimage course could well be carried over into the act of working on a final project together. The assignment for the final project was using the resources in the class in creating a long-term educational plan for shaping and nurturing a congregation or parish into a pilgrim church.

All of these small pedagogical changes support the main thrust of the course and this immersion approach to educating Christians: to teach students something about the theological, anthropological, and historical genre of pilgrimage narratives, and offer them an opportunity to engage in the practice of pilgrimage itself. This happens best when the students and the professor are immersed in the practice of pilgrimage for the

entirety of the course, and then walk together on a fifteen to twenty-eight mile pilgrimage as the final activity. With this immersion approach to educating Christians in the practice of pilgrimage, the professor and students come to see and appreciate the complexities of educating Christians not only through intellectual discourse, but through encountering Christ along the pilgrim's way in daily lives. When our bodies, minds, and hearts are formed according to Christ in Christ's body, then our actions may be vehicles of grace to others, as Michael Casey observes (1996, 39). With some attention to how this pilgrimage course will lead to the ongoing pilgrimage in life after the course is finished, it is this professor's desire that the entirety of the student's life is taught and nurtured for an ongoing pilgrimage.

It is my hope that the pilgrimage, which is our life, becomes a school in which we continue to learn Christ, what Joan Chittister calls the "Jesus-life," who meets us in the unexpected encounters in this world along the pilgrim's way.

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