



Doggy Bag: Something to Chew On and Ponder Throughout the Week

1. First, bring to mind, one aspect of your life that is going well. Give God thanks for this aspect of your life. Now, bring to mind *one* experience in which another person's great suffering enriched and challenged your life.
2. How do you respond to the concept of a "Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope" that Pastor Abi introduced in the sermon last week?
3. At the beginning of the Season of Lent, how would you describe your present spiritual practice? Non-existent? Inward but lacking an outward dimension? Outward but lacking an inward dimension? Balanced?
4. How do you feel about becoming a pilgrim in daily life?
5. Under the headings *tourist* and *pilgrim*, brainstorm your immediate responses to these two words. Compare the two lists, and notice their similarities and differences.

TOURIST

PILGRIM



6. Re-read Mark 14:32 – 42. Share one way in which you are "awake" to the divine presence in your everyday life now. In what one way do you desire to cultivate a genuine pilgrim's heart toward life?
7. Name *one* negative feeling that sometimes surfaces when you are with a suffering person. Take a moment to give it to God through prayer.
8. How do you respond to your potential to love as Jesus loved? What has helped you most grow as a follower of Christ?



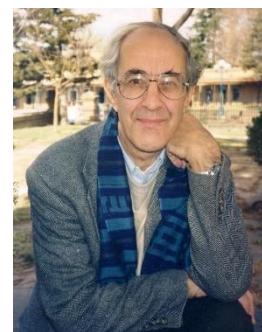
Walk a Mile in Your Shoes Learning to Cultivate Compassion

Encountering Our Suffering Neighbor

Philippians 2:12 - 18 (NRSV)

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Who are the great spiritual leaders of our day?
Your own life?

ONE EXAMPLE: Henri Nouwen

Consider: Often the men and women who live the most Christ-like lives are remembered for their commitment and proximity to those who suffered in their midst. Their words and witness align.

REVIEW "3 ESSENTIAL PILGRIMAGE INGREDIENTS"

1. Encounter
2. Reflection
3. Transformation

We encounter the _____ in our suffering neighbors.

Some examples of how our neighbors suffer: Terminal illness, depression, poverty and/or homelessness, families experiencing divorce, loss of a child, addiction, feeling isolated due to aging or bereavement, facing challenges because of learning or physical disabilities. Others?

Listen to Paul's words from prison:

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind... ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus... (Phil. 2:1, 4 – 5)

How do we cultivate a “pilgrim’s heart” and avoid a “tourist’s mindset” as we encounter our suffering neighbor?

¹² *Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (v. 12 – 13)*

- We learn to _____.

Begin to pray this prayer: “Dear Lord, show me how to open my life more generously to the meaning and mystery of the present moment.”

Experiment: Start by taking 5 minutes to declare your intentions. “I will not pull away from the present moment. I am here. I am in the presence of God.” See what happens.

- We learn to _____.

¹⁹ *You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger... (James 1:19)*

Grow in self-awareness by assessing the quality of your current listening ability. Ask yourself the following 10 questions:

- A. Am I known as a chatterbox?
- B. Do I interrupt others midsentence?
- C. Do I “switch off” when I disagree with what’s being said?
- D. Do I complete other people’s sentences?
- E. During conversations, am I often preoccupied with my own thoughts and feelings?
- F. Do I plan my answer while others speak?
- G. Do I fear silence in conversations?
- H. Do I tend to jump in with my own story and take over instead of listening?
- I. Am I often impatient while listening?
- J. Do those closest to me often complain I don’t listen to them?

If you answered “yes” to several of the questions above, commit to working on your listening skills going forward. **God gives us lots of opportunity to practice!**

- We learn to _____.

There is ... ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. (Eph. 4:6)

²⁰ *Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. (Rev. 3:20)*

BOTTOM LINE: God is knocking at the door of your heart!

Will you open the door and let him come in to sup with you as we seek to encounter our suffering neighbors through an intentional pilgrimage of pain and hope this Lent, and in the months to come?

¹⁴ *Do all things without murmuring and arguing, ¹⁵so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world. ¹⁶It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. (v. 14 -15)*