

THE PILGRIMAGE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Millennium and Pilgrimage

- The Pilgrimage: sign of the Jubilee
- Famous targets of pilgrimage in ancient times
- The meaning of pilgrimage in the context of the Jubilee
- The pilgrimage of the individual and of the community

2. Our life is a pilgrimage (Theology)

- In the Old Testament
- In the New Testament
- In the Church
- Conclusion

3. The Spirituality of Pilgrimage (Songs of Ascent)

- Feelings and attitudes of the pilgrim
- Fruits of the Spirituality of the pilgrim

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER

JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME

Fr. Lorenzo Carraro, MCCJ

MILLENNIUM AND PILGRIMAGE

Introduction: The meaning of the Great Jubilee Pilgrimage

1. The Pilgrimage: sign of the Jubilee

“The institution of the Jubilee has been enriched throughout the centuries by different signs which attest the faith of the Christian people and, at the same time, help their devotion. Among those signs, *the pilgrimage* has pride of place” (*Incarnationis Mysterium*, n.7).

We can therefore say that the Pilgrimage traditionally is a sign of the Jubilee. But in reality, the pilgrimage came into existence a thousand years before the Jubilee. The first Jubilee took place in the year 1300 A. D. and it was the initiative of Pope Boniface VIII, whereas the first documentation about pilgrimages to the Holy Land is of the IV Century and it belongs to a woman.

We have a book by the title **Peregrinatio** (Pilgrimage) written by a woman pilgrim, **Egeria**; the book has incalculable value because it describes for the first time the places of Jesus' life and death in the Holy Land as they appeared at that time.

Egeria was following the example of another famous woman, Helena, the mother of emperor Constantine, who first showed interest in the places of Christ's life and death. She is the one who discovered the relic of the Cross of Jesus.

2. Famous targets of pilgrimage in the ancient times

The custom to go in pilgrimage to the tomb of the martyrs is testified by the amazing story of the discovery of the tomb of St. Peter in Rome in the fifties by the archeologist Margarita Guarducci. Excavations were allowed by Pope Pius XII under the main altar of St. Peter's basilica and the remains of a I century pagan cemetery were found and, in a diagonally different position, a Christian tomb which contained the bones of an adult male ...Those bones are now in the urn on the small altar dedicated to St. Peter, placed under the main altar of the St. Peter's basilica.

When the second and present basilica was built after 1200 years by Michelangelo, the position of the main altar was religiously respected even though by then the memory of the actual tomb of the Prince of apostles was lost... What a fascinating story !

So, to add to Rome and Jerusalem, other targets of pilgrimage, during the ancient times, were Canterbury in England, the place of the martyrdom of St. Thomas Becket;

Loreto where the “Santa Casa” was believed to have been brought by the angels and Lucca where the relic of the Holy Face (the “Santo Volto” of Veronica) is kept and more than anywhere else Compostela in Spain where the body of the apostle St. James is believed to be buried. Other places of pilgrimage became famous and frequented by the Christian people elsewhere like Guadalupe in Mexico (El Tepeyac) and Antipolo in the Philippines (our Lady of Peace and Bon Voyage).

3. The meaning of pilgrimage in the context of the Jubilee

With the institution of the Jubilee the pilgrimage assumes even more all its symbolic meaning of a **Journey of conversion**: to come out, come away from sin and start a journey towards God. The pilgrimage to Jerusalem had become impossible because of the presence of the Muslims in the Holy Land. Rome as a consequence becomes the target of the pilgrims: **i Romei**.

“Come, obedient sons and daughters of the Catholic Church, come, climb to the place that the Lord has chosen, go up to the spiritual mountain of the Lord, the heavenly Jerusalem. This is that happy city whose faith, praised by the apostle Paul, is announced in the whole world, this is the city in which St. Peter and Paul taught up to the point of giving their life in martyrdom; this is the city which has become, thanks to the presence of the Holy See of Peter, the centre of the whole world, mother of all the believers and head of all the Churches.

Here is the rock of faith, here the source of the priestly unity, here the unchangeable doctrine, and here the treasure of all the indulgences which are made available by the Holy Father who is their keeper and dispenser, in a special way during the time of the Jubilee” (Pope Clement VIII, *Annus Domini Placabilis*, 1599).

In reality, the pilgrimage is a powerful symbol of the itinerant condition of our human existence in this world. Life is a journey from birth to death: HOMO VIATOR. And since our life comes from God and tends towards God, then our journey of life becomes a sacred journey. A PILGRIMAGE.

We are on a journey towards our homeland: “**Non habemus hic manentem civitatem... Civitas nostra in coelis est**” (*Hebrews* 13:14). Conquently, here, in this world, we are in exile and we are on a journey towards our home which is the Lord:

“We are always full of confidence, then, when we remember that to live in the body means to be exiled from the Lord, going as we do by faith and not by sight – we are full of confidence, I say, and actually want to be exiled from the body and make our home with the Lord” (2 *Corinthians* 5:6-7).

4. The Pilgrimage of the individual and of the community

The existential pilgrimage becomes the journey of imitation of Christ who went up to Jerusalem carrying his cross to accomplish the will of the Father, his redemptive mission.

“The whole of the Christian Life is like **a great pilgrimage to the house of the Father**, whose unconditional love for every human creature and in particular for the “prodigal son” we discover anew each day. This pilgrimage takes place in the heart of each person, extends to the believing community and then reaches to the whole of humanity.

The Jubilee, centered on the person of Christ, thus becomes a great act of praise to the Father: ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him’ (*Ephesians* 1:3-4)” (TMA, n. 49).

The Jubilee Pilgrimage is not only the symbol of the individual journey of faith, but also of **the journey of the Christian community**, the Church throughout the centuries. The Pope brings another beautiful image of movement: **the river**.

“The many Jubilee celebrations (27 in all) recall the journey of Christ (with his Church) down the centuries, leading to the Great Jubilee at the end of the second millennium. Seen in this light, the whole of Christian history appears to us as a single river, into which many tributaries pour their waters.

The year 2000 invites us to gather with renewed fidelity and ever deeper communion along the banks of this great river: the river of Revelation, of Christianity and of the Church, a river which flows through human history, starting from the **Event** which took place at Nazareth and then at Bethlehem two thousand years ago. This is truly the “river” which with its “streams”, in the expression of the Psalm, “make glad the city of God” (*Psalms* 46:4)” (TMA n. 25).

This is the theology of the Jubilee Pilgrimage and it calls for a fitting spirituality; The pilgrimage must be the sign of **an interior journey of faith into ourselves and towards God by means of prayer and penance**. The signs of this are the practices of the Jubilee: the reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Communion, taking part in a liturgical celebration, adoration, meditation, prayer for the Pope (*Credo and Our Father*) and the pilgrimage.

There are 4 targets of sacred journey nowadays: The Holy Land, Rome and the visit to the 4 major basilicas; the visit to the cathedral of our home diocese (or our parish church) and the visit and assistance to the poor: **“Christ , present in a pilgrimage towards the poor”**.

OUR LIFE IS A PILGRIMAGE

(Theology of Pilgrimage)

Our life can be compared to a journey towards God. This journey is a sacred journey, a **pilgrimage** (*PEREGRINATIO*).

I. In the Old Testament:

1. This idea of the journey, the way, comes to us from the religious experience of the people of Israel, a nomadic people: Cf. *Deuteronomy* 30:15-20: to know the way, the right way, the right direction is very important for an itinerant creature:
the two Ways:

“See, today I set before you life and prosperity, death and disaster. If you obey the commandments of Yahweh your God that I enjoin on you today, if you love Yahweh your God and follow his ways, if you keep his commandments, his laws, customs, you will live and increase, and Yahweh your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to make your own. But if your heart strays, if you refuse to listen, if you let yourself be drawn into worshipping other gods and serving them, I tell you today, you will most certainly perish; you will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. **I call heaven and earth to witness** against you today: I set before you life or death, blessing or curse. Chose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live, in the love of Yahweh your God, obeying his voice, clinging to him; for in this your life consists, and on this depends your long staying in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob he would give them”.

2. Israel is not content with general moral teaching: their religious experience leads them further. Abraham is called by God **to set out on a way, on a journey**, thus to start a vast religious experience, an adventure... The starting point is faith, the obedience of faith. The initiative, the call belongs to God.

3. The **Exodus** is the outstanding example of this religious adventure: God walks with his people: He opens up a way through the mighty waters, through the desert. God opens up a way for the people through death: **the Passover**. God is seen as the Shepherd of the people: *Psalms* 23

4. The memory of the Exodus, recalled each year during the feast of the Passover, impressed itself deeply into the mind of the people: God is present among the

people and his presence makes the people pass from death to life, reach their destination.

The material journey of Exodus becomes a spiritual journey; the historical journey of the Israelites becomes an existential journey, a personal journey.

It is in the Liturgy that the individual and the community interiorize the historical journey: **the pilgrimage to Jerusalem** makes the experience of Exodus become present day reality: in prayer, in order to renew the fruits of salvation and liberation in the soul, at any given stage of one's journey.

There is a group of Psalms which express the feelings of the faithful in the yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the great feasts of the community in which Exodus and the Covenant with God are renewed and revived: **the Songs of Ascent: 120 – 134.**

II The New Testament:

1. The climax of the journey of humanity towards God is realized in the **Blessed Person of Jesus**, his Exodus and Passover in the Paschal Mystery: in Him we all come out of slavery and exile. It is no longer an affair concerning the Chosen People; but He is **the Son of Man**: in his destiny he represents the whole of humankind. In his Passover, we are all set in motion to pass from death to life, from sin to grace.

John 3:16-17 “Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved”.

Jesus' Journey: *John 16:28* “**As I came from the Father and have come into the world, so I am leaving the world and going to the Father**”. Cf. *Philippians 2:6-11*.

2. If the whole life of Jesus can be seen as the climax of the journey of humanity towards God, in the life of Jesus, there is a moment in which the spirit of the Pilgrimage-**Peregrinatio**- appears more emphasized and stressed: **his journey towards Jerusalem** in order to die for us.

It is the evangelist Luke who describes in a unified way the journey of Jesus towards Jerusalem and the significance of it for Jesus' Mission:

Luke 9:51 "Now, as the time drew near for him to be taken up to heaven, he resolutely took the road for Jerusalem..."

- *as the time drew near*: or as the days were on the point of been accomplished. The plan of God is behind this crucial moment in Jesus' life. On the Cross Jesus will cry: "Everything has been accomplished".

- *for him to be taken up (to heaven)*: the expression: taken up or lifted up is parallel to the other we find in verse 31 (the Transfiguration): The Exodus or the Passage, Passover (what Jesus was discussing with Moses and Elijah on the Holy Mountain).

It reminds us of "the lifting up" of John. The 2 terms express the 2 sides of the same reality: Jesus' Baptism; Jesus' cup, Exodus, Passage: last death; taken up, lifted up: his resurrection. It is the heart of the journey so that what comes before is a preparation and what comes afterwards is a perfectioning or a development of the essential core the Paschal Mystery.

- *He resolutely took the road to Jerusalem*: literally: *he hardened his face* to walk towards Jerusalem. It means **determination**: it is the attitude of the prophet and the servant who goes along the way of obedience to God's plan without looking back. This hardness of Jesus is the counterpart, the opposite of the hardness of heart of disobedience and flight, escape: e.g. Adam

- *Towards Jerusalem*: there is where the prophet has to die; the place where the plan of God has to be accomplished, where all the peoples will come in pilgrimage to be drawn into unity.

III The Church:

1. **Jesus' Exodus becomes our Exodus.** The reflection and meditation of the early Church, the Pilgrim Community, is centered on the Paschal Mystery. In the Acts of the Apostles, Christianity is first called simply **The Way**. The Way is no longer the Law, but a Person, Jesus, who has embodied in his destiny, our destiny:

In Him occurs the Passover and the Exodus of the Christians:

- *One must walk (Colossians 2:6):*

“You must live your whole life according to the Christ you have received: Jesus, the Lord; you must be rooted in Him and built on Him and held firm by the faith you have been taught, and full of thanksgiving”.

- *Following the way of love (Ephesians 5:2)*

“Try then to imitate God, as children of His that He loves, and follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving Himself up in our place as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God”.

- *The way of Agape, Charity, Love (1 Corinthians 12:31)*

“Be ambitious for the higher gifts. And I’m going to show you a way that is better than any other ...”.

2. But it is *the letter to the Hebrews* that we find the **most profound theological reflections about the Way:**

a- 10:19-20

“In other words, brothers and sisters, through the blood of Jesus, we have the right to enter the sanctuary, by a new way he has opened for us, a living opening through the curtain, that is, his body” (Cf. *John 14: I AM THE WAY*).

b- 12:1-4

“With so many witnesses in a great cloud on every side of us, we too, then, should throw off everything that hinders us, especially sin that clings so easily, and keep running steadily in the race we have started. Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection: for the sake of the joy which was still in the future, he

endured the cross, disregarding the shamefulfulness of it, and from now on has taken his place at the right of God's throne. Think of the way he stood such opposition from sinners and then you will not give up for want of courage. In the fight against sin, you have not yet had to keep fighting to the point of death".

- *Who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection*: "To live in faith and by faith means to give way to Christ so that He may express Himself and grow in our life" (*Romano Guardini*).
- *Archegos*: the trail blazer, the pioneer and *Teleyotes*: the one who completes, the perfecter. The whole chapter 12 of the *letter to the Hebrews* is up to the point.

Conclusion:

The people of God is a priestly people who follow Jesus on Christ's trail: **Egredere**: "Go out & Set out" (*Genesis 12:1*): God's command to Abraham befits God's People in their journey towards the heavenly Jerusalem.

Nomadic people, people always on a journey, the new Israel, the Church, accept to make of their lives a pilgrimage with all the risks that it entails, keeping their eyes on and entrusting themselves to the infallible the presence of the One who opens the way and assists us to the end: **the trail-blazer**. The target, the Promised Land, is the heavenly Jerusalem.

This immense crowd of people on a journey is a **procession** which climbs towards the temple: **Peregrinatio**. It is a sacred march, a liturgy. They give to God a worship in spirit and in truth. It is a priestly people.

Already at Sinai (*Exodus 19:6*) the Israelites were made into a priestly people. Much more so after the sacrifice of the new Sinai, Calvary, the new people of God, the Church, are made into a Priestly People.

From his/her Baptism, every believer shares in Christ's Priesthood in as much as every believer is called to offer his/her life and death as a redeeming sacrifice with Christ and in Christ. Because we are incorporated (or grafted) into Christ, we are sure that our sacrifice is accepted by God, the Father of mercy.

We are one reality with Christ, we also have “passed from this world to the Father”. We exercise this priesthood by uniting ourselves to Christ who lifts up the oblation of our life and death to become a sacrifice of praise and redemption.

In this way we announce the word which reconciles humanity with God, we open a way for this reconciliation by fighting against sin and injustice, by building a new order according to God's will and the spirit of the Gospel. This is the Priesthood of the Pilgrim People. We take others along in our journey towards the heavenly Jerusalem.

Nobody however can give such priestly value to his/her existential sacrifice. We must be united with Christ, our Head (source of life and holiness) and our Chief (source of unity and cohesion). These two meanings are contained in the word: **CAPUT**.

Christ continues his presence and his action in the Church by means of the Ministerial Priesthood and the Sacramental System which is entrusted to it. Common Priesthood of the Faithful or Spiritual Priesthood, is the offering of life, body and soul, sufferings and joys, sorrows and death, in union with Jesus, for the salvation of the world, through the sacraments.

“Jesus Christ is the same today as He was yesterday and as He will be forever”
(*Hebrews 13:8*).

[illegible]

The Spirituality of Pilgrimage

(The Songs of Ascent)

In the Psalms of Ascent of the Psalter (or **Songs of Ascent: 120-134 + 23, 24, 84**), we learn the Spirituality of the Pilgrim. There **Pilgrimage/Peregrinatio** becomes a symbol of penance and search for God and the image of the Pilgrim speaks to our existential condition, helping us to reflect about it and to live it out more consciously, especially during the Lent period.

The Pilgrim is on a journey towards the temple of God, the holy city of Jerusalem, in order to see the Face of the Lord, and to celebrate his mighty works of liberation and redemption.

The Psalms of Ascent give us:

I. the feelings and attitudes of the Pilgrim as well as the conditions required for a fruitful journey. It is good to go through these feelings together, as they are beautifully expressed by the eternal words of the Psalms, to express in prayers our condition of pilgrims:

1. Desire and longing for the Lord and his temple:

* *Psalms* 84:1-2: “How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord, God of hosts. My soul is longing and yearning ..”

* *Psalms* 122:1-2 “I rejoiced when I heard them say: Let us go to God’s house. And now our feet are standing within your gates, o Jerusalem”.

The desire, the longing for God and His presence in our life is at the heart of the desire for his temple; the presence of God is held in faith and it becomes

1. Unshakable trust in the Lord:

* *Psalms* 123:1-2: “To you have I lifted up my eyes, you who dwell in the heavens; my eyes like the eyes of slaves on the hand of their Lords. Like the eyes of a servant on the hand of her mistress, so our eyes are on the Lord our God till He shows us his mercy”.

* *Psalm* 125:1 “Those who put their trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, that cannot be shaken, that stands for ever”.

* *Psalm* 127:1-2 “If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builders labor ... In vain is your earlier rising, your going later to rest, you who toil for the bread you eat, when he pours gifts on his beloved while they slumber ...”

The longing and the yearning for God’s temple, for God’s vision, give

3. courage in the midst of difficulties, like the pilgrim who passes through difficult places, longing for the moment of arrival:

* *Psalm* 84:6-7 “As they go through the bitter valley, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rain covers it with blessings; they walk with ever growing strength, they will see the God of gods in Zion”.

* *Psalm* 124: “If the Lord had not been on our side ... when men rose against us, ... then would have swept the raging water ... Our life like a bird has escaped ...”

* *Psalm* 126: “When the Lord delivered Zion from bondage, it seemed like a dream ... Those who are sowing in tears, will sing when they reap. They go out, they go out full of tears, carrying seed for the sowing; they come back, they come back full of songs, carrying their sheaves”.

But the hardest experience of the pilgrim is to

3. fall into sin: that is really the bitter valley where even hope seems to be absent; where only God’s pardon can rescue us. It is the **ditch:**

De Profundis: Request for Pardon and Mercy:

* *Psalm* 130: “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice ... My soul is waiting for the Lord, I count on his word. My soul is longing for the Lord more than watchman for daybreak ... Because with the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption”.

Marvelous cry from the heart and piece of religious poetry which describes the human condition in its depths and, at the same time, is full of peace in the expectation of God’s mercy.

Another feeling of the pilgrim is

5. the joy and serenity in the experience of the presence of God, even if this presence is held in faith;

* *Psalm 131*: “O Lord God, my heart is not proud nor haughty my eyes; I have not gone after things too great nor marvels beyond me. Truly I have set my soul in silence and peace. As a child has rest in its mother’s arms, even so my soul. O Israel, hope in the Lord, both now and for ever”.

This little psalm is the climax of the *Songs of Ascent*; because the virtue which befits the pilgrim more than any other is the virtue of hope. This abiding in the sure hope in God’s love and mercy, in God’s presence in our life, goes hand in hand with

6. the experience of brotherhood: we are not alone in our journey:

* *Psalm 133*: “How good and how pleasant it is when brothers live in unity. It is like precious oil upon the head running down upon the beard, running down upon Aaron’s beard, upon the collar of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon which falls on the heights of Zion. For there the Lord gives his blessings, life forever”.

7. Conclusion: But the psalm which expresses and sums up the feelings of the pilgrim more than any other is *Psalm 23*: “The Lord is my shepherd.

Who are the true pilgrims? They are those who fulfill the conditions for climbing the mountain of the Lord:

Psalm 24: 3-6: “Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place? The man with clean hands and a pure heart, who desires not worthless things, who has not sworn so as to deceive his neighbor... Such are the men who seek him, seek the face of the God of Jacob”.

II. Fruits of the Spirituality of the Pilgrim:

1. The pilgrim knows where he is going:

The pilgrimage calls me to a deeper sense of my journey of faith and my call to holiness. I also am a pilgrim: my life enfolds inexorably, day after day, month after month, year after year. Where am I going? Where am I heading to? Have I kept my sense of direction? Does the call to holiness, to the perfection of love, has still a meaning for me?

Do the steps in the journey of perfection (purification, illumination, union) have an attraction for me? “*Fecisti nos, Domine, ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te*”. Do the three degrees of humility described by St. Ignatius still inspire me?

2. The pilgrim walks with the Lord.

How do I live the PRESENCE OF GOD in my daily life. “If the Lord does not build the house... “The Lord is my Shepherd”...Or, on the contrary, do I live and work as if I had here my permanent abode; if everything depended on me, on my strength, my money, my qualities, my efforts...

3. The pilgrim travels light.

How is my sense of detachment? Am I free to follow the will of God manifested in obedience, the demands of apostolate and service; or do I cling to things, to people? To my fears, prejudices, complexes? Let me remember that poverty of spirit is for the fullness of life and of love.

3. The pilgrim walks in hope.

Hope is the sign of the Pilgrim Church. The community which goes ahead in the strength of Christ’s word, in the certainty that Christ is the Lord of history, that He is our absolute future. Hope, the Christian virtue of hope, chases away complaints, despondency, cynicism, discouragement, it keeps our heart young and fresh.

An example of this virtue of hope in the face of the uncertainty of the future is the beautiful book by Pope John Paul II in which his interview with the Italian journalist Vittorio Messori is contained by the title, written by the Pope himself: **Crossing the threshold of hope.**

If the pilgrim is tired in the evening, because the journey has been tough, in the morning he/she has the eagerness of setting out again, at a good pace, hoping in the Lord of surprises ... Is this my attitude? Or am I tired, depressed, disillusioned, disenchanted, cynical...

5. Pilgrims walk together

With their brothers and sisters: life in solidarity. None of us is an island. In the journey, we support one another, we care in a special way for the ones who are weak, we

share; and again, we encourage one another, we warn one another, we awaken one another, we learn from one another ... We even wait for one another. How do I live the community aspect of my pilgrimage?

6. The pilgrim dreams, thinks of the target,

The end of the journey, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Holy Zion of God. We dream for ourselves and we dream for the world... Peace, development, justice, the respect for the integrity of creation, holiness... We keep alive in us and in others God's dreams about us that made Him send his Son Jesus into the world.

We dream that God's plan may be fulfilled in the IIIrd Millennium... We want to contribute to the fulfillment of God's dream with our life and consecration.

Cf. *Isaiah*, 52:7: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the one who brings good news, who heralds peace, brings happiness, proclaims salvation and tells Zion : Our God is king, Our God reigns".

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER

JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME;

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER,

THE LORD IS THE SAME.

Fr. Lorenzo Carraro, MCCJ,

Calamba, September 21, 2000