

THE WAY

Guided Journal



This journal is an accompaniment to the
Worship Design Studio Advent series,
“The Way.”

<https://worshipdesignstudio.com/theway>

This journal includes reflections on the movie, “The Way,” directed by Emilio Estevez and starring his father, Martin Sheen. It is a beautiful movie that grounds us in the ideas of life as a pilgrimage. Find out where to watch it [HERE](#) (or use the QR code on this page).

This journal can be used independently from the worship series or any church gathering. It can be used privately or shared with a friend or in a small group setting.

May the content in this journal lead you down a path of pilgrimage that takes you to new heights and depths along your spiritual journey.

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film's page on
IMDB

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Introduction

Lent is a time of reflection, and there's nothing like a pilgrimage to conjure that up. Making intentional journeys has been a ritual of humankind across time and traditions. Inspired by passages in the Judeo-Christian scriptures that talk about the journeys, roads and pathways of life, we will make our way together through this season. The popular and poignant movie, *The Way*, about a father's pilgrimage in honor of his late son on the famed Camino de Santiago in France and Spain, accompanies us as our modern-day inspiration to live the life we've been given to the fullest.

This movie may conjure up emotions in you. It visits classic themes such as grief, direction of life, exhaustion, anger, fear... and these are all met with themes of redemption, spiritual renewal, friendship, healing. In other words, it helps us reflect on life.

No matter whether you can make an international pilgrimage such as the Camino de Santiago or not, we are all on a life pilgrimage. And we can make small journeys whenever we add intention to walking a path, a labyrinth, a road, a shoreline. I hope you will add this to your Lenten practice this year. Walk/run/stroll/roll in silence or to music, an uplifting podcast, or your own way of praying. I'll be leading "Street Wisdom Walkshops" online during the Lent season if you'd like to join me at www.worshipdesignstudio.com/walkshops. These are short, easy community adventures either outside or from the comfort of your chair and you can interact with others in whatever way suits you. Or simply use this journal as a way of taking a pilgrimage in your mind, heart, and spirit. See you "on the road!"

Many blessings on your journey ("Buen Camino!").

Peace & Passion,
Dr. Marcia McFee
Creator and Visionary
Worship Design Studio



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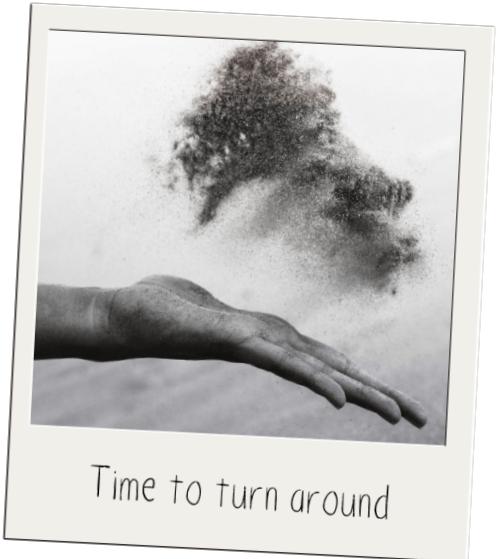


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Ash Wednesday: THE WAY BACK

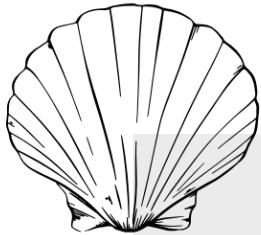
Sometimes things happen in our lives that cause us to awaken to a new perspective, and we begin to reassess the life road we are following, the directions we are going. Ash Wednesday is a time in the church where we talk of “repentance” which literally means to turn around and head in a new direction. This night, we will receive ashes in the sign of the cross on our foreheads, a traditional sign of our own mortality and the necessity of making this life purposeful.



Time to turn around

“Yet even now,” says the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.”

– from Joel 2: 12-17; 28-29



Ponderings from the Movie

In the film *The Way* (2010), Tom Stanley drives his son Daniel to the airport to embark on the Camino de Santiago, an adventure that Tom disapproves of. During the drive, their conversation about choices reveals that Tom has been hiding in his work since his wife’s death. Daniel tells him, “You don’t choose a life. You live one,” reminding us that while we can’t control everything that happens, we are still called to live fully. After identifying Daniel’s body following a tragic accident, Tom’s grief turns to despair. When asked by a priest if he’d like to pray, he responds, “What for?” Yet through his pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago, he begins to discover that transformation doesn’t come from changing circumstances but from being changed within. Ash Wednesday reminds us that life is fragile, but God’s mercy and presence endure. Even in our “what for?” moments, one faithful step at a time can lead us from loss toward renewed spirit and the way back

In the scripture for this week, God asks for sincerity rather than performative gestures. The season of Lent is an opportunity for us to grow closer with God by examining the true state of our hearts and minds. So, where are you really at lately? Are you feeling the nudge to turn in a new direction in your relationships, work, or aspirations for the future?

Consider a time when life took an unexpected turn, perhaps one you didn't choose or even resented at first. How did that experience invite you to live more deeply rather than simply manage or plan? In your own "what for?" moments, where have you sensed quiet mercy or a glimmer of renewal beginning to emerge?

God of All Souls
who have ever traveled The Way of Life,
you know the depth of ache
we sometimes feel on the journey.
We come seeking your guidance,
as we consider the paths and directions of our lives.
Help us to find our Way Back to you,
to choose to turn towards you,
as the Ultimate Companion on The Way.
Amen and Buen Camino!





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Lent One: THE WANDERING WAY

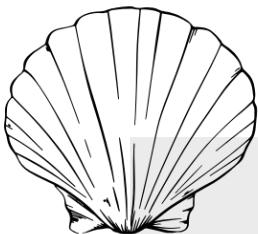
After Jesus 'baptism, he goes on a pilgrimage into the wilderness. A common practice among spiritual leaders of his day, this was a time to dig deep into the humanity of his soul. Along the way, he encounters what we all encounter along the paths of life: temptations to stray from the path that God has intended for us. But "all who wander are not lost," for it is in the wandering that we find our true selves.



Not all who wander are lost

Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.

— Luke 4: 1-2



Ponderings from the Movie

In the movie, *The Way*, we get some comic relief after heavy grief scenes as Tom heads out on his impromptu pilgrimage. He starts out heading the wrong direction... twice. Oh my. This reminds us that we all get "pumped up" sometimes for making changes, going in a new direction, finding new possibilities in our lives, and we go headlong into what we think is the right "way" only to find that we haven't really given it enough thought or preparation. But, as Tom says, "here we go." And we deal with whatever mistakes we make or confusion we encounter. It all becomes part of the unveiling of who we are—with all our courage and our foibles.

We learn more about ourselves along the way.

After Jesus 'baptism, he wanders the desert for forty days, wrestling with temptations. Have you ever been tempted to follow a path that you knew wasn't the right fit? During the times in your life that you have felt lost or directionless, what eventually gave you a sense of purpose?

Reflect on a time when you started something new—a change, a risk, a new path—and it didn't go as planned. What did those early mistakes or detours reveal about your assumptions, hopes, or fears? Looking back, what do you see now about who you were becoming in those moments of confusion or redirection?

**God of the Pilgrimage,
be with us on The Way.**

**At times, we don't know if we are on the path
you would have us travel.**

How do we know the direction for our lives?

**We come seeking your guidance,
as Jesus showed us to do.**

**Help us to be at home even in our wanderings,
knowing that you are ever with us.**

Amen and Buen Camino!





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Lent Two: THE HIGH WAY

We are taught that everything costs. But our ways are not God's ways. We are all invited, without price, to the abundance of God's grace. This is the higher way that we are invited to embody for the sake of the world. The "rich food" that we are invited to partake is the richness of life when all have enough not simply to survive, but to thrive. Hospitality is the way—even though we do not agree on everything, we are still one family at one table.

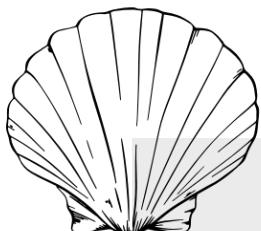


Plenty for everyone!

"Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. . . .

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

— Isaiah 55: 1-9



Ponderings from the Movie

The wonderful feast scene early in The Way is inspiration for us this week.

When Tom arrives, the host greets him saying, "we were expecting you," confusing Tom until he realizes that the host's greeting was a signal that all pilgrims are welcome there. What if we lived as if we were "expecting" any stranger/pilgrim who crosses our path? What if we greet each person in search of sustenance with "Welcome, we were expecting you?" Even as the group of strangers eating together argues about the telling of history from their different perspectives, they eat and celebrate and share together, embodying what it is to be a family of humanity, the kin-dom of God, at one table even with our differences... welcoming all.

Whenever we gather at tables in a spirit of love and community, we are joined by a “cloud of witnesses” and the “communion of saints” in the mystery of time and space. Take a moment to recall those who have been at tables with us that we miss but can imagine if we but open our imagination to include them.

When have you experienced a moment of unexpected hospitality, where someone made you feel as though you already belonged? How might you extend that same spirit to others who cross your path, especially those who see the world differently? What would change in your relationships, community, or inner life if you lived as though every encounter was with someone you had been “expecting”?

God of Grace,
we know you are with us on The Way.
But we need sustenance in order to make the journey.
As we come seeking peace and a place at the table,
we find that you have already prepared and were expecting us.
Help us to set tables of abundance
for all who travel this journey of life,
just as Jesus did.
Amen and Buen Camino!





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Lent Three: THE WAY AROUND

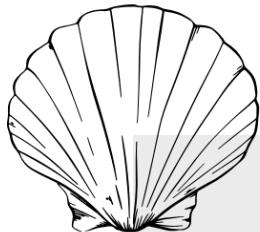
We are not always understood. Jesus found this out, just like so many of us. Close family, friends, and neighbors may cling to an idea of who we are and cannot imagine we have grown beyond that identity. And likewise, we may do the same to them. We are called to move ahead and do what we feel called to, claiming who we know we are, taking the way around what others think we ought to do and be. And we offer the same steadfast love and encouragement to others.

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way...’”

– from Luke 13: 31-34



It's OK to grow



Ponderings from the Movie

So many guidebooks, so little consistency! The pilgrims argue over which guidebook is better, more accurate, and why they have the slants they have. Because Danes are just looking for the next party. Or Americans always have an opinion. The question this week includes reflecting on what “guidebooks” we are following and why. What values do we have in our lives that draw us to our decisions along the way? Are we following what we believe in, or are there other influences that take us astray? Jesus laments that “Jerusalem” rejects the very prophets sent to help it, that he would gather the people as a hen (God) gathers her chicks underwing. But instead, they are out to get him... or at least throw him off his mission.

Do we know what our mission is so that we can stay true to the path that gets us there?

Jesus faces pushback and threats and from the Roman authorities during his ministry. Have you ever encountered resistance from others when living out your calling and doing what you knew was the right thing for your own life? How did you respond?

What voices, values, or influences shape your decisions and sense of purpose?
Where do you notice yourself being pulled off course, either by fear, habit, or the expectations of others?

**God of the Bending Road,
be with us on The Way.
We find ourselves changed
by the things we encounter and the people we meet.
We want to grow and yet sometimes
the growing pains can be disorienting for everyone.
Help us as we navigate the twists and turns,
and help us see that others are doing the same.
Amen and Buen Camino!**





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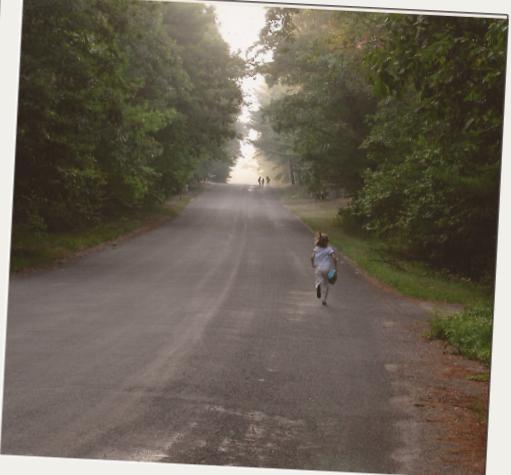
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Lent Four: THE WAY HOME

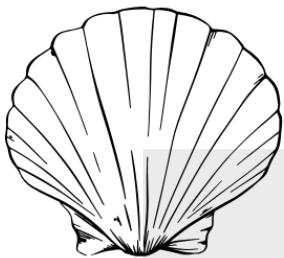
No matter what we call “home” in this physical world, we yearn for a spiritual home within that offers serenity, acceptance, and belonging without question. The extravagant acceptance of the father for the son in Jesus’ parable of the wandering son is difficult for us to believe sometimes—that no matter what we have done, who we are, how far we are from what we want to become, we are welcomed home by the Loving Parent.

“Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

— from Luke 15: 11b-32



There's no place like home



Ponderings from the Movie

There is a moment in the film when Tom and Sarah have an honest conversation about the loss of a child. Sarah lost a child before it was born, and Tom remarks that his “baby” was almost 40 when he lost him. She says in reply, “but he’ll always be your baby.” This movie is rife with commentary on the relationship of parents and children (especially because the director and lead actor are father and son in real life!). A poignant addition to this ongoing narrative is the stop along the way in which an encounter with a gypsy boy shows his father desperately wanting to change the narrative of identity for his son. His own persecution and misunderstanding from others as a member of the gypsy community moves him to seek standards for his son that are better, different. Tom’s desire to lessen the severity of the punishment of the son is a symbol of his own change of mind toward his son’s decisions—we are seeing him soften. He is becoming filled with grace and empathy and would give anything in that moment to be able to be with his son again. Coming home to one another, despite what we’ve done, is essential. Forgiveness, empathy, and hospitality in the face of difficult relationships is saving grace.

Read Luke 15: 11-32, the parable of the lost son. To which of the sons do you feel the closest resemblance: the son who stayed and toiled in his father's fields and resented his brother's special treatment, or the son who found himself in need of forgiveness and a place to call home?

Where in your life might there be a relationship that needs softening—a movement from judgment to empathy, from distance to welcome? What helps you open your heart to someone you've misunderstood, or who has misunderstood you? How might you take one small step toward “coming home” to another person—or even to yourself—through forgiveness or compassion?

Our God who is our Home,
be with us on The Way.
At times we aren't sure about
the relationship of the road we travel
and the home we seek.
Will we ever feel like we have arrived?
We come hoping for the hearth of acceptance
in the home that Jesus promises.
And whether we are feeling lost or at home,
may we know you are always with us.
Amen and Buen Camino!





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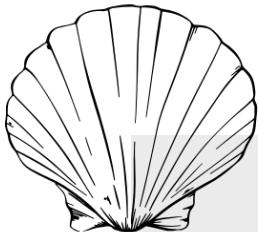
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Lent Five: THE FREE WAY

New paths are possible through freedom in Christ. And these ways can be made plain before us if we have eyes to see. Yes, we will strain against adversity—such is life. But new paths are always possible. New horizons are ours through relationship with God and with each other. There will be both stumbling blocks and stepping stones along the way. But God is our rock and our redeemer—God is with us in our every step.

Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

— from *Philippians 3: 12-14*



Ponderings from the Movie

Freedom, in this movie, comes from facing and releasing the burdens carried around that weigh us down. The pilgrims carry a rock, part of a long tradition of the Camino. They come to the place in the journey where thousands of pilgrims before them have offered their rocks as a sign of having walked for the sake of transformation. The traditional prayer seems a bit “legalistic” (the walk on the way is somehow related to offsetting the sins they have committed), but if you consider the rock as a symbol of those weights that we have either created for ourselves (or others) or burdens we have refused to let go of, then it makes sense that making this reflective journey and a ritual of intentional release is a kind of “salvation”—a saving grace. Perhaps “pressing on” when we want to quit the journey is the spiritual practice that can eventually bring us a measure of freedom for our lives.



Freedom

The Phillipians passage reminds us that looking back can often slow us down. Letting go of the past, really letting go, is not an easy task. Yet every time we rehash hard memories, our brain synapses actually strengthen the memory. What memory could use a little less reinforcement, less rehashing, in order to give yourself the energy you need to strain forward on your journey?

Think about any “rocks” you might be traveling with through life. What weight have you been carrying—regret, resentment, guilt, perfectionism, or perhaps the need to control? What might it look like to set it down, even a little, and let the road hold it for you? How could perseverance in your current journey, pressing on with faith rather than striving, lead you toward a new experience of freedom?

**God our Rock,
be with us on The Way.
At times we are not sure how we will
carry the burdens of grief and disappointment
that accumulate in life.
We come asking for help
in lightening the load
so that we can be free to move in new directions.
Help us to help each other as Jesus asks us to do.
Amen and Buen Camino!**





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Lent Six: THE OTHER WAY

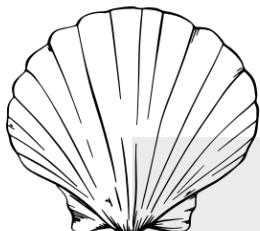
This moment on the road for Jesus feels both like the end and the beginning. Such are so many moments of our lives. A pilgrimage may reach its destination, but the hope, the wisdom, the lessons learned along the way have offered a new starting point for us. What have we learned and what transformation—what “other way”—are we called to in the name of right relationship in our lives?



Pointing the Way

As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!”

— from Luke 19: 28-40



Ponderings from the Movie

As the companions in The Way round the corner and glimpse the Cathedral of St. James—their long-sought destination—they join countless pilgrims who've felt both thrill and sadness at this moment, realizing the journey itself has become the destination (to use a cliché). What began as one purpose has evolved along the way, just as Jesus 'entrance into Jerusalem stirred fear, hope, and longing in those who witnessed it. So too in our own lives, as we near milestones or realize dreams, we discover that every ending is the beginning of something new. Tom has been told it is important to continue on to the sea after visiting the cathedral. Perhaps the limitless horizon of the sea is the true vision of the future.

Jesus entrance into Jerusalem was a poignant commentary on what “power” really looks like: it is a power “with” rather than a power “over.” The donkey on which he rode made him eye-height with the crowds on the side of the road. Just as the pilgrims in *The Way* movie came to depend on each other, who is your community that supports you in your journey toward your goals and dreams?

When have you reached a long-awaited goal or ending, only to discover that it opened a new chapter? How has a journey you once thought was about arriving actually changed who you are becoming? What “sea” might be calling you now—a vast, unknown horizon that invites you to keep walking, trusting that there is more life ahead?

**Jesus of Palm Sunday parades,
be with us on The Way.
We wonder if we have what it takes
to truly march in the name of justice and love for all people.
Are we able to sacrifice the paths that benefit only us
for the ones that make a way in the wilderness for the least?
We come seeking your courage and resolve
in order to follow your way of love.
Amen and Buen Camino!**





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Holy Week: THE LOVING WAY

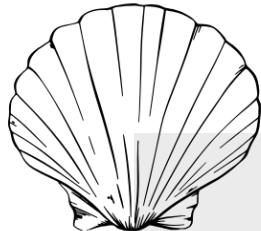
This is the moment that Jesus travels the most difficult part of the human path: suffering. Whatever suffering we have experienced on our own life paths, Jesus knows the pain. In the midst of all of it, he invites the disciples to a surprising turn in the face of violence and death: that in the navigating of our lives, the most important choice we can embrace is that of love, no matter what.

"Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come. I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

– from John 13: 1-17, 31b-35



Love, no matter what



Ponderings from the Movie

Throughout The Way, Tom glimpses his son Daniel in fleeting, sacred moments—first at the site of his death, then among fellow pilgrims, and finally as a monk swinging the great thurifer (incense pot) in the Cathedral of St. James. Such visions reflect how love endures beyond loss, how absence can still shimmer with presence through memory and heart. Like the disciples grieving Jesus, yet promised his enduring presence, we too carry our loved ones forward in spirit. Daniel's loving gaze toward his father contrasts with their strained exchanges before his death, reminding us, just as Jesus told his followers, that love is the mark of true discipleship, the lasting echo of a life shared.

Often, we cannot carry one another's burdens. Each of us has unique life experiences, dreams, flaws, and histories. But there is joy to be found in even the most difficult journeys when we share the road together. Have you ever experienced a transforming connection with someone on the road? How does traveling with companions ease the way of our own suffering?

Where have you glimpsed or felt the presence of someone you've lost—in memory, beauty, or quiet moments? How has that unseen companionship shaped the way you live, love, or see the world now? What might it mean for you today to embody that same kind of enduring love—the love that, even through loss, keeps showing up?

Jesus of Holy Week,
your Way led to unspeakable suffering.
The scene repeats itself over and over in our world
and we wonder if there is anything we can do to alleviate it.
We ache for the ones we no longer have with us
and the ones that will leave us.
We come seeking your presence and healing
for all hearts and bodies that experience the pain of life.
Amen and Buen Camino.



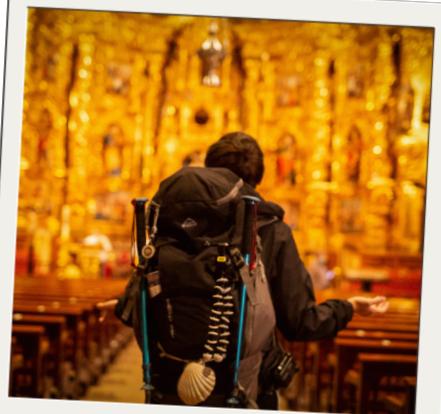


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Easter Sunday: MAKE YOUR WAY

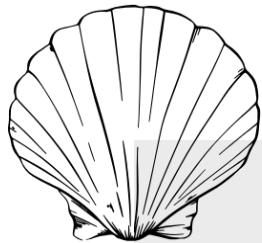
The morning comes and grief turns to fear and then to astonishment and joy. The message is clear; Jesus is not dead, and they are given instructions to make their way to Galilee where he will meet with all the disciples. And so, we make our way this morning to meet the risen Christ on the shores where the disciples were called and where we are called once again to be the Christ's risen Body on the way to liberation from death into renewed life, renewed journeys, forevermore.



Behold

But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.”

– from Matthew 28: 1-10



Ponderings from the Movie

In the end, each pilgrim on The Way comes home to themselves in a deeper sense. Sarah's journey isn't about quitting smoking, but learning to love herself while healing from abuse; Jack's isn't about finding the right words, but realizing that silence and wonder can give rise to true expression; Joost's isn't about losing weight, but embracing joy and self-acceptance. Their transformations reach beyond habits—they rediscover what brings them alive. Tom, too, finds renewed passion and peace, continuing his travels with quiet assurance. The film reminds us that no matter our losses or failures, we are all pilgrims on life's journey—never alone, always beginning again, and called to live fully the life we have.

Easter is a day when we celebrate new life and the gift of hope, even after death. What makes you come alive lately? In what ways can you embrace life and live it to the fullest?

Reflect on your own pilgrimage of becoming. What illusions or self-demands have fallen away in this season as you've learned more about who you truly are? Where do you sense new life stirring—a peace, joy, or purpose emerging from within rather than from achievement? What might it mean, here and now, to come home to yourself—to live the life you have with renewed freedom and love?

**God of Renewed Life,
we give you thanks for Ultimate Good News—life wins!
On this day of celebration of the rising of Jesus, the Christ,
we open ourselves to our destination: your unending love.
We know that whenever we need direction,
we have only to begin the journey afresh and you will come alongside.
Thank you, Spirit, for the wind beneath our wings, the pep in our step,
the flame of desire for life and love renewed.
Amen and Buen Camino!**





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