

22nd June 2020

Pilgrims

“Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth, beste, out of thy stall.

Know thy contree, look up, thank God of al.”

Geoffrey Chaucer, Truth: Balade de Bon Conseyle

In 1620, the Pilgrim Fathers left Plymouth in *The Mayflower* seeking religious freedom. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, written in 1678, offers pilgrimage as an allegory for the Christian life. Abram set out from Ur of the Chaldees on a journey into the unknown. Paul's missionary travels took him to new places. These, and other examples, remind us that pilgrimage has always been fundamental to the story of faith.

The concept of pilgrimage is, thankfully, being rediscovered. The ancient *Way of St James (The Camino)*, as it's become known, the pilgrim route to the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Northern Spain, has regained its popularity. A weekly pilgrimage has taken place on the Island of Iona for decades. There's the recently created *St Magnus Way* through Mainland Orkney. Locally, there's *The Forth to Farne Way*, from North Berwick to Lindisfarne. But pilgrimage in social isolation?

Surely we don't have to embark on *The Mayflower* or walk to Lindisfarne to be on a pilgrimage. The 16th century English reformer, William Tyndale, urged believers to *go on a pilgrimage unto thine own heart and there pray*. The journey inwards is as important as the journey outwards. The inner pilgrimage to find yourself, and, as Chaucer suggests, to know your own country, is as important as the outer one. Elizabeth O'Conner in her book, *Journey Inward, Journey Outward*, suggests that *we have to be people engaged with ourselves if we are going to find out where we are and where it is we want to go*.

This seems an ideal time to embark on that engagement. If physical restrictions curtail our "outward journey", giving thought to the "inward journey" is good for us – a pilgrimage of faith for us all.

A prayer for today

*“There's no discouragement shall make him relent,
his first avowed intent to be a pilgrim.”*

John Bunyan, "Who would true valour see."

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