

The Beak

Mystical Footprints
Epiphanies & Pilgrimage



a community rag for a ragged community
Winter 2006

Editorial

Mystical footprints ... the impressions made upon our souls by pilgrimages to far-away places, by enjoying the most common and near-at-hand elements of existence, by following in the tracks of poets and mystics, by personal experiences of epiphany and grace, and by the sharing of these stories within our community.

This issue of The Beak prepares the way for the next issue which will focus on various ways of channelling spiritual energy into acts of creation, healing, and transformation. But before such re-visioning must come the original vision, the original blessing. In this issue,

therefore, we embark upon a multi-faceted pilgrimage that is both outward and inward, active and contemplative, that is oriented toward giving after having received so richly.

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Epiphanies

Everybody is a mystic. Everyday experiences, relationships and objects manifest divinity. The mystical journey of our common life might be punctuated, however, by moments of epiphany ; moments of realisation when the divine is seen with especial clarity.

Epiphanies may come by surprise or they may dawn slowly. They may induce a state of ecstasy or deep calm, or a great sense of direction and purpose. Here, some members of the St Paul's community share their moments of epiphany with us.

Closer than a Heartbeat by Karen King

Many years ago, my mother, my sister, a few close friends, and myself would gather at my mother's house for meditation. After each session we would invite one another to share experiences or thoughts arising from the meditation. I had nothing to share except a feeling that I might as well throw it in, as I wasn't getting anywhere. During one meditation, however, I had a perfect moment of realisation. I became immersed in love and supported by and in this love. I felt entirely safe and utterly and completely loved.

There was no point of reference. Instead, there was the sense that "I" ceased to exist and yet "I" had never felt more alive, more

joyful and utterly and completely at peace. I "knew" that I was one with this limitless ocean of love. I realised that this nectar is what we are in and what we can't exist without. I emerged from this meditation laughing. I laughed till I hurt. I laughed because it was all so effortless and because "it" required no searching or effort or "doing" on my part.

I now know that I "dropped" into reality by dropping everything else – all hopes, fears, thoughts and emotions. But it wasn't a conscious decision. I can only describe it as complete surrender in effortless grace to the Source/God that truly, is closer than a heartbeat.



Gail Sallies Third

*'Vocation' comes from the Latin **vocare**, to call. Gail Falconer, not content with going where angels - let alone girls - feared to tread into the field of Mathematics in the 1960's, feels called to storm another bastion of male dominance, the priesthood. Gail is St Paul's third priestly candidate, following in the intrepid footsteps of Lynn Eastoe and Sue Lodge-Calvert Watch this space - who might sally fourth?*

In the 1960s when people asked me what I wanted to do when I left school, I said that it would be something to do with mathematics. That was a fairly "out there" thing for a girl to say at the time and it certainly would not have been an option to consider becoming a priest! Living with a sense of call for a long time was a very uncomfortable experience and a long period of denial followed by discernment has been shrouded in uncertainty and anxiety.

I was forced to move from denial to discernment when I was struck blind by a rare parasite and had to lie still in pain and darkness. It seemed strange that I could see the most clearly when I could not see at all. Once I allowed the call that I had denied for so long to unfold with its own energy, a wonderful sense of flow permeated every aspect of my life. 'Letting

go' and 'letting God' was the hardest part. The trust that I now feel is helping me to experience transition as an ongoing part of my life and I am learning to 'be' rather than 'do'. The image of blindness is a powerful reminder to see differently and use other lenses. I still fall back into the language of control or doubt God's plan at times but then I tell myself to let go again and the flow continues in a transcendent and deeply satisfying way.

A new insight has been that I have a new choice when I come to the river of anxiety. In the past I would have jumped in and tried to keep afloat, like a duck appearing calm and self-assured but paddling furiously underneath; or if I was being cautious through fear I would problem solve so that I could cross it in the least painful and most effective way at the easiest point. My new choice is that I can sit on a log next to the river and just be for a while, perhaps understanding why this particular river is in the way.



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Between Dreams and Visions

Joan Matthews has experienced God's presence many times; she recounted some of these to Jan Newman

I was kneeling down for the Prayer of Consecration, and when Canon Gundry reached the words "This is my body...." I heard them spoken by a stranger's voice, not him. I had my head bowed and felt so absolutely petrified that I dared not look up as I didn't know who I might see in Canon Gundry's place. I was extremely scared and overtaken by the sense that every nerve in my body was throbbing and jumping. This stayed while I had Communion, and later on I felt really elated.

We were supposed to have choir practice after the service but I was nearly in tears and told Cyril Hale the Choirmaster that I couldn't stay. I drove home to Melville and for almost a week I cried constantly and yet was not unhappy. I set up a little table in one corner of the lounge room, with flowers and a candle – probably because of my Catholic upbringing! I prayed and sang and cried. It took a week for me to get over it, but my life from that point was changed in so many ways.

This first epiphany happened in the late 1960's; it opened up new vistas of knowledge and wisdom and took her on a path of helping troubled young girls, amongst other things. After this, Joan recounts many experiences of 'seeing' visions, feeling God's guidance on how to 'be' with people and various healing roles, both emotional and physical. Joan continues:

There ought to be a word that describes an experience that lies between dreams and

visions, because many times since I have seen visions while possibly sleeping – but not quite! The first of these involved Canon Gundry's mother. She lived in St Paul's Rectory and was not only old but extremely frail. I heard that she had pneumonia and so popped in a couple of times to see her and was always taken aback at how frail her hand felt when I held it.

During this time I was arranging flowers in the church on a Saturday afternoon, and Canon Gundry's wife came in to see me. She was a nice person but that day was a bit prickly, only wanting to talk to me about how unfair it was that God allowed sickness and suffering – I suppose she was feeling the weight of her mother-in-law's illness, amongst other worries Later that night I went to bed and at some point (I must have been sleeping and yet was somehow awake) I was looking across the hallway into the lounge room and saw that one of the French doors was opening. I had no fear. I walked over to the door and a long, bony hand came through. I took hold of it and then felt underneath the cold hardness become warm and alive. I turned and went back to bed.

The next morning in Church, Canon Gundry announced that his mother had died during the night. I immediately thought and felt "How privileged I am!" Later I was amazed that I had taken this as normal. I told a couple of others about the experience but realised soon enough that it wasn't for general discussion!



Sky Pilot: the Still Small Voice

As one of twenty-one young Air Force pilots, Stuart Hogan was posted to Saskatchewan in Canada, where he had a powerful experience of God's guidance. This excerpt from Stuart Hogan's story, was kindly supplied for The Beak by Beryl and Stuart Hogan.

In March 1945, nearing the end of winter, the chief flying instructor told me I could not graduate at next week's "wings parade" until I had completed a solo night cross country. I had been sick when all the other students had completed their course and he instructed me to report to the control officer at 9 o'clock that night to prepare the flight plan and take off.

All went quite well for about thirty minutes, then suddenly everything blacked out. I was flying from North Battleford, Saskatchewan, to Calgary at the foot of the Rocky Mountains and the land was still covered in snow. I tried to report on the radio to Calgary base, but they did not respond. I knew my radio was OK as I had checked it out as I left North Battleford. I let Calgary base know what I thought of them for ignoring my call in and I then turned to fly to Winnipeg. Everything was in darkness but I knew that I was over a city because I could see several small red lights moving around and knew as a railway man that these were the lights from moving locomotives. I tried to report on radio to the Winnipeg base but again no one would talk to me and confirm that I was on course.

By now I felt well and truly abandoned and was really scared. Our instructions as pilots were to bale out if lost and ditch the plane, but before doing so to send mayday signals on the radio and give approximate position. However, I did not want to crash my plane onto unsuspecting civilians, nor did I wish to bale out in such icy cold and snowy conditions. So I decided to head in the direction I thought was North

Battleford and this *time I asked God for guidance. Immediately* the thought came to me to climb higher. When I could not go higher because of the fuel mixture I levelled out and at that moment sighted a small flashing light in the far distance. I knew right away that this would be the beacon at Battleford for the passenger plane from Alaska, which always refuelled there for the onward trip to Chicago. I headed toward this beacon and on reaching Battleford, called on the radio and *at last* they answered and told me the passenger plane was almost due and I was to stay in the air until further instructions. The lights were put on for the passenger plane. Within ten minutes I saw the approach of the plane and I received instructions to make my approach. Upon landing I went to the control officer and found out that a practice 'blackout' had been suddenly called for the whole of Canada and when the Australian base requested permission to recall me they were refused. *I was supposed to crash and bale!* Next day the chief flying instructor saw me and said "You had a dark trip last night and the Calgary and Winnipeg radio people did not appreciate your comments to them!" However, he said, 'WELL DONE'!

Note: the total journey for Stuart that night amounted to 2,640 km.



Headless

The Common mysticism of Thomas Traherne

Priest and poet, 1637-1674

by Alison Kershaw



egyptian mandala omnos flickr

A Little Child Again

Mystic rapture is so often described as something rare, and as something only experienced by a highly disciplined and select few. But for Thomas Traherne - a seventeenth century English priest and poet – it was easily come by if one simply saw and enjoyed the world “aright.” He felt that every person, with every breath of air, was connected to the divine. He also believed that the divine Life was manifest in every thing - that the most common things, such as air, water, and trees are the most to be marvelled at, the most to be desired and valued, because the most indispensable to life. Such common things, he wrote, “cannot be Seen without a Vision, and a Trance, and a Rapture.” (Kingdom of God chap 17 ; cf.: Numbers 24:4.)

Traherne tells us that his vision of the holiness of all things came naturally to him in infancy

Those Pure and Virgin Apprehensions I had from the Womb, and that Divine Light wherewith I was born, are the best unto this Day, wherein I can see the Universe. By the Gift of GOD they attended me into the World, and by his Special favour I remember them till now.

(Centuries of Meditation III.1)

Of his own birth he writes:

All appeared New, and Strange at the first, inexpressibly rare, and Delightful, and Beautiful. I was a little Stranger which at my Entrance into the World was Saluted and Surrounded with innumerable Joys. My Knowledge was Divine. (Centuries of Meditation III.2)

Rejecting the doctrine of original sin, Traherne urges us to recapture the pristine infant vision of the world, to become again as the newly arrived “little stranger.”

Our Saviors Meaning, when he said, He must be Born again and become a little Child that will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: is Deeper far then is generally believed. (Centuries of Meditation III.5)

The Green Trees when I saw them first through one of the Gates Transported and Ravished me; their Sweetness and unusual Beauty made my Heart to leap, and almost mad with Ecstasy.



For Traherne, the Kingdom of Heaven is entered through a profound enjoyment of the earth. In the following passage he describes his infant view of the world both within and beyond the gates of the walled city of Hereford where he was born, and records the easy rapture with which he encountered heaven on earth:

The Corn was Orient and Immortal Wheat, which never should be reaped, nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting. The Dust and Stones of the Street were as precious as GOLD. The Gates were at first the End of the World, The Green Trees when I saw them first through one of the Gates Transported and Ravished me; their Sweetness and unusual Beauty made my Heart to leap, and almost mad with Ecstasy, they were such strange and Wonderful Things: The Men! O what Venerable and Reverend Creatures did the Aged seem! Immortal Cherubims! And the young men Glittering and Sparkling Angels and Maids strange Seraphic Pieces of Life and Beauty! Boys and Girls Tumbling in the Street, and Playing, were moving Jewels. I knew not that they were Born or should Die. But all things abided Eternally as they were in their proper Places. Eternity was Manifest in the Light of the Day, and some thing infinite Behind every thing appeared: which talked with my Expectation and moved my Desire. The City seemed to stand in Eden, or to be Built in Heaven. The Streets were mine, the Temple was mine, the People were mine, their Clothes and Gold and Silver were mine, as much as their Sparkling Eyes, Fair Skins and ruddy faces. The Skies were mine, and so were the Sun and Moon and Stars, and all the World was mine, and I the only Spectator and

Enjoyer of it. I knew no Churlish Proprieties, nor Bounds nor Divisions: but all Proprieties and Divisions were mine: all Treasures and the Possessors of them. So that with much ado I was corrupted; and made to learn the Dirty Devices of this World. Which now I unlearn, and become as it were a little Child again, that I may enter into the Kingdom of GOD. (Centuries of Meditation III.3)

No Brims nor Borders

According to the 20th century theologian Teilhard de Chardin, “the great mystery of Christianity is not exactly the appearance, but the transparence, of God in the universe.”

Yes, Lord, not only the ray that



Mike Heron & Robin Williamson of The Incredible String Band <http://www.angelfire.com/biz3/ISB/>



strikes the surface, but the ray that penetrates, not only Your Epiphany, Jesus, but Your diaphany. (Le Milieu Divin.)

It is with such an awareness that Traherne writes not only of an ecstatic vision and possession of the world, but also of being possessed – even permeated - by it:

The Eye openeth upon the whole World, and letteth in the Beauty of all the Universe, informing the Soul with the Glory of Heaven and Earth (Seeds of Eternity)

“The World,” he felt, “was more in me, then I in it.” (*Silence*) – or as Teilhard describes, “the world itself had invaded my being.” (*The Mystical Milieu*) The prone spirit, reflects Traherne, “in its own Centre is a Sphere / Not shut up here, but every Where.” It enters into a seamless union with the infinite universe that surrounds it:

*No Brims nor Borders, such as in a Bowl
We see, My Essence was Capacity (My Spirit)*



<http://www.knott32.fsnet.co.uk/>

The Headless Way

Traherne’s works were lost for centuries. The continuing story of their recovery began in the early twentieth century and involves a series of serendipitous accidents – including a rescue from the flames of a rubbish tip. Traherne’s “little stranger” was especially welcomed as a child of the expansive 1960’s. Douglas E. Harding’s mystical theory of “the headless way,” for example, was partly inspired by Traherne’s sense of the spirit as having an infinite “capacity” for the world. Harding developed exercises based on the observation that one cannot see one’s own head and that the empty space where one’s head might be is taken up with the sight of the universe. This concept was taken up by the psychedelic Incredible String Band in the song “Douglas Traherne Harding” on their cosmically titled 1967 album *The Big Huge*. It opens with the Traherne inspired lines:

*When I was born I had no head
My eye was single and my body was filled with light*

The refrain is also taken from Traherne – The Incredible String Band only directly quote the first phrase, but I will quote the whole meditation, as it is these words that first drew my own attention to Traherne. They filled me with a sense of elation and expansion and light and reminded me that to be a mystic child of the universe, all I had to do was to forget my head, and be as open to the world as the infant who does not perceive any boundary between herself and what encircles her. They also reminded me that my own joy might be



infinitely magnified for it is held in common with all people: each person can delight in the delight of another, and in the delight of an infinite number of others:

You never Enjoy the World aright, till the Sea it self floweth in your Veins, till you are Clothed with the Heavens, and Crowned with the Stars: and Perceive your self to be the Sole Heir of the whole World: and more then so, because Men are in it who are every one Sole Heirs, as well as you. Till you can Sing and Rejoice and Delight in God, as Misers do in Gold, and Kings in Scepters, you never Enjoy the World.
(Centuries of Meditation I.29)

Further reading:

Thomas Traherne: Poetry and Prose. Ed. Denise Inge. Golden Age of Spiritual Writing. London: SPCK, 2002

Douglas E. Harding, *On Having No Head, Zen and the Rediscovery of the Obvious*, (London: Arkana, 1961) ; The Headless Way: <http://headless.org/English/main.html>

Seventh Day

Passive I lie, looking up through leaves,
An eye only, one of the eyes of earth
That open at a myriad points at the living surface.
Eyes that earth opens see and delight
Because of the leaves, because of the unfolding of the leaves,
The folding, veining, imbrication, fluttering, resting,
The green and deepening manifold of the
leaves.

Kathleen Raine



The Incredible String Band, The Big Huge, 1968
<http://www.knott32.fsnet.co.uk/isbp/bighuge.jpg>

A Transparent Eyeball

Standing on the bare ground, my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space – all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball. I am nothing. I see all. The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me.

I am part or a particle of God.

Ralph Waldo Emerson 1803-1882 Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks



To be a Pilgrim by Gabrielle Dean

Pilgrimage has been a part of human life for over 3000 years – long before the word found its place in our language. Dictionaries tell us a pilgrim is ‘a person who journeys to a holy place as an act of religious devotion, (C12 from Provencal pelegrin, from Latin pelegrinus – from foreign parts).’

Fascinating too is that ‘peregrination’, meaning a journey and ‘peregrine’ derive from the same Latin root as ‘pilgrim’. The peregrine falcon is described as ‘a superb success as a bird, combining great speed, aeronautical grace, and fearlessness . . . inhabitant of wild places, inaccessible cliffs, and skyscrapers . . . worldwide dweller; trans-equatorial migrant,--the peregrine falcon stands alone among all others of its kind.’

These days, the concept is applied equally to religious quests and to journeys to secular ‘shrines’ – ANZAC Cove, Graceland, Stratford-upon-Avon. What sets pilgrims apart from tourists is that their voyage, from the outset, has a purpose – religious, penitential, commemorative or at the very least, a search for identity.

The most important pilgrimage we make, however, is to ourselves, to our own hearts - within and throughout our own lives - to find ourselves as children of God. May our peregrinations be superbly successful and fearless; may our hearts find the wild places.



Who would true valour see,
Let him come hither;
One here will constant be,
Come wind, come weather

copyright lagiuspo at the Mtv Day 2005, Bologna



Camino 2007 by Chris Williams

Each year, thousands of people from all over the world walk the Camino de Santiago across Spain to Santiago de Compostela.

The Camino was one of the three great pilgrimages of mediaeval Europe, after Rome and Jerusalem. Believed to be along the route of an earlier Celtic pilgrimage, the Camino's Christian origins are related to the Apostle St. James ("Santiago" in Spanish). Santiago Cathedral is said to be the resting place of the bones of St James the Great, one of the fisher brothers James and John who responded to Jesus' call and immediately left their nets (Mark 1.19).

Medieval Christian practice emphasised the cults of saints, veneration of their relics and salvation through a difficult journey.

The late 20th century revival of interest in the Camino de Santiago appears to be based on the search for personal and spiritual meaning in a secular and materialistic age.

Pilgrimage is an opportunity to take time out from modern life and reflect, perhaps on a symbolic turning point such as a birthday, retirement or recovery from major illness.

Many pilgrims find the Camino transformational, including some who start as spiritual or cultural tourists. However, numbers of people undertaking the Camino Francaise (the major route) are growing exponentially and motivations vary widely.

Likewise, information available on the practicalities of pilgrimage is vast such that undertaking the Camino is no more difficult than the average overseas holiday. One may wish to go with a group but it is not difficult to walk alone and there are sound spiritual reasons for doing so.



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Pilgrimage as both outer and inner journey, and metaphor for life, is the emphasis of some members of St Paul's Anglican Church, Beaconsfield who intend to walk the Camino de Santiago in May 2007. If you want to join our occasional conversations, please let us know.

Further reading:

Joyce Rupp; *Walk in a Relaxed Manner* 2005 (Orbis Books) Maryknoll, New York
Available from St John's Books, Fremantle

For the practicalities, see
["http://www.santiago-compostela.net/"](http://www.santiago-compostela.net/)



Camino 2007

by Christabel Chamarette

People have asked why I am walking the Camino again - it will be my third visit, although the first time I was driving a support vehicle and only walked the last 100 kms, so it will only be my second full walk of the 800 kms distance.



My answer is that at the end of the last one which I walked to celebrate my 50th birthday, it was only

at the end that I felt a sense of how I should have been doing it all along! I was like that at school and at uni too. I hope I won't still be feeling that at the end of my life - can that be a rehearsal and can I have another go?

In May 2007 it will be 9 years since the last time and I will be coming up to my 59th birthday. The prospect of revisiting the experiences and seeing the changes over the intervening time is very exciting. I also want to go back and take the knowledge and wisdom I found then to see if I can be more aware of the journey. I see a sense of progression from last time, a development and also a continuity. This wouldn't be possible in the same way if I did a completely different route.

On the simplest level of the physical task, I want to be fitter when I start and also to

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carry a much lighter pack. There's a metaphor just in that, isn't there! So with that in mind and away from everything except what I seek, I want to be able to empty myself of distractions and 'noise' quicker - carry less 'weight' so that my 'fitter' soul can engage the task more easily, be more open and and more present.

I don't see anything particularly high-minded in walking the Camino - it's hard work. But there is such delight in discovering a Roman bridge or some other sign that you are following in the footsteps of so many others. Two of my favourite mystics, St Francis and Teresa of Avila, walked the route too, so it is powerfully evocative of the search that we human beings have been on for centuries.



शंखनिपदेहं

A Passage to India

An account of Peter
Humphris' journey from his
journals
by Gabrielle Dean

'Coffee, escargot, listening to Elgar's 'Pomp and Circumstance' on BBC, as an elephant passes outside for religious festival' - so Peter records some vivid juxtapositions of India. In his three month journey, he is blessed by an elephant, marvels at children huddled under streetlights doing homework and peers into the cardboard home of a family of five. He feasts on Southern Indian cuisine served by a butler and celebrates a friend's birthday with champagne and a three-piece orchestra. Perhaps these contrasts are only to be expected if one goes the second most populous nation on earth in search of silence!

Peter's journey can be seen within a framework of some recognisable stages of pilgrimage. Initially there is some discomfort and questioning; as the journey progresses, he finds peace; then there is a looking back with thankfulness for a deepened relationship with God, as well as looking forward to what he can bring back home to St Paul's. Interestingly, the discomfort and questions remain, but they cease to be sources of disturbance, anger or frustration.

'Slowly – the silence is working its magic'

Peter's expectations of Shantivanam, Bede Griffith's ashram, were high, as he had long looked forward to being there, so part of his early disturbance may have stemmed from this. In the initial weeks, Peter needed to resolve feelings of

disappointment and physical discomfort before he could fully partake of the experience as he had hoped. He wrestled with unrelenting heat, lack of sleep and being dish of choice for most of Southern India's eighty billion mosquitoes - 'Getting angry at the heat and the insects – have to make friends with both to find the coolness of peace' - while sitting cross-legged for long periods caused aching joints and muscles which hindered his ability to reach a meditative space.

Some of his dislocation manifests itself as disappointment with the orthodoxy and simplistic nature of the doctrine espoused by the fathers. But his anger quiets as he begins to rejoice in small victories – simple pleasures like a good night's sleep or 'only a two mozzie bite [journal] entry' – and with this comes compassionate appreciation of the work of the head of the ashram and identification with the constant demands on his time.

'Can silence contain it all?'

Having arrived at some equanimity though, silence itself becomes a question: 'So much to talk about, to share, to explore and to experience – I wonder if silence can contain it all?' Questions he poses about the 'simple life' - 'do I really embrace the simple/pure ... or do I prefer a more smoke-filled, social scene and a scotch or two?' - reflect his awareness of the need for balance, both in his own realisation of life in its fullness and in bringing life to others.





Smiles all around...copyright © Faisal Sohail

Leaving the ashram, his regret as he sets out once again *'into the unknown'* is balanced by the freedom of being able to leave, in the knowledge the ashram will still be there, both in its physical location and in his heart.

'Why not build on what has gone before?'

At the ashram of Sri Aurobindo, Peter is at first impressed with the depth of insights in the teachings and feels an affinity with the larger vision of community 'Auroville' seems to offer. However, he becomes increasingly aware of the cultish attachment the devotees appear to have for Sri Aurobindo and his female acolyte, 'The Mother', while the demand for followers to give up their religion to enhance harmony within the community gives a sense of rigidity and regression.

Some Jungian psychologists see these elements as aspects of the 'shadow' side of pilgrimage, in which pilgrims attach their quest (and give away their power) to physical elements such as relics or 'saintly' figures, and so lose the focus of their search.

'Life here is so very real'

On returning to his 'cell' one night Peter notices children doing their homework under the meagre light of a streetlight: *'Life here is so very real'*, he writes, noting the contrast with the relative comfort of Auroville. How far does Auroville serve the wider community?



While questioning and discerning continue however, Peter at last approaches a wonderful sense of *'the Peace of God which passes all understanding'* as he has time and space in the ashram library. The *Bhagavad Gita* affirms common truths for him, while his study of correspondence between Bede Griffith and a disciple of Sri Aurobindo mirrors his own conversation with the two models of ashram.

'Silence or needles?'

At this stage, Peter recalls a third example of community, glimpsed at the needle factory operated by his friends and hosts early in the trip. Manufacturing around 35,000 products, including the minute needles used to stitch new lenses into the eyes of cataract patients, the factory supplies needles of every size all over the world and provides a community for its employees. With some of the profits, a church and health centre have been built for the community. Peter sees in this a valid way *'our spirituality can give life to and be informed by our being fully engaged with our "worldly" vocations'*. The needle factory not only offers a practical model and an alternative to Sri Aurobindo's 'experiment', but also represents what Peter perceives to be a major potential of India, where the sacred permeates the whole of life. Perhaps the separation of the sacred and the secular in Western civilisation serves to hinder the creation of community?

'How good Lord, to be here'

At Bodhi Zendo Peter delights in the 'stunning' hill terrain and beautiful Japanese sand garden, although once again he finds the physical elements of *Zazen* difficult – *'can I ever be still; my mind is constantly distracted by trivia'*. But in simple tasks of peeling potatoes, sweeping and weeding the Japanese garden Peter feels *'filled with love for self and others and all'*.

And in the peace of Bodhi Zendo, the Zen garden at St Paul's is first kindled in Peter's imagination!



St Paul's ceiling

'It is as if I need to learn to breathe'

Within the tranquility of the surroundings Peter enters into deeper connection with the Divine. Learning new skills or re-learning old ones and having difficulty even reaching 'Stage 1', Peter writes, *'It is as if I need to learn to breathe'*, and realises with both joy and surprise a *'growing sense of just starting my priestly ministry'*. Perhaps this experience reflects the eternal beginnings of life, ministry and pilgrimage:

'Confronting to feel journey is yet to begin - what does that say about life's journey so far? Also a delight to find always and forever there is a journey to begin and much more of my inner landscape still to discover.'

'Together in the Word'

Throughout the journey, he feels a positive and loving connection with St Paul's. He marks the passing of the Centenary Dinner – which, he notes on 23rd August, *'is probably being debriefed at Gino's as I write'*, the consecration of the Memorial Garden, and of course, his thankfulness and love for Christian and Gabrielle. As he looks forward to what he will bring home, there is also *'a realisation of busyness and complexity that seems so distant from the silence and simplicity of being here ... Already*

as I look ahead to getting home I can feel, with almost trembling, how much there is to do ... But also know the place best 'to do it' is from the place of stillness and silence – the place of prayer'. And on a free Sunday morning, Peter finds a place of prayer and studies the readings from the lectionary: *'Nice to sit with readings shared at St Paul's, together in the Word'*

Palaces and plastic bags

A lasting impression of Peter's journey is contrast – *'even the coast, the very edge, is the same contrast of beauty and disgust'*. The cleansing mists over the tea plantations up in the clouds contrast with sewage and a bloated animal corpse on the beach; a woman spends her days alone on the city streets as thousands teem past her; palaces sit side by side with whole fields of plastic bag waste. Somewhat awed by the realisation that he finally feels he could stay longer, he writes, *'Wow! The dirt, the mozzies, the heat, but the sacred, the silent, the simple, the earth!'*

'My real self'

In his final assessment, Peter feels *'affirmed', 'surprised', 'so much to find', 'filled with wonder', 'wholeness', 'closer to God'*, and realises, *'it is as if I have got closer to my truth – my REAL self: the call to follow is to become what one already is.'*

'Vast and fathomless'

Peter has returned with a renewed commitment to exploring the truth to be found everywhere -

*'Though the Dharma is vast and fathomless
I vow to enter it fully'*

- but with the same lively discernment that enables him to see the pitfalls of embracing *all* of anything!

Peter's journals give a glimpse of the eternal beginnings of his life journey, and in his journey each of us may sense our own eternal beginnings.



Who Would True Valour See

by Gabrielle Dean

Come wind, come weather, undaunted by hobgoblins or foul fiends, each Sunday pilgrims make their way to the sacred shrine of St Paul's, Beaconsfield. Most come thither by camel or donkey, and although some do come barefoot, it is rare these days to see penitents approaching on their knees or prostrating themselves. Alas, standards are not what they were.

Like all pilgrimages, this is a journey of the soul. Elements of danger and moments of despond can alternate with ecstatic transcendence: you will need to gird your loins for the valiant struggle ahead.

The first obstacle, the turn across traffic at the entry to the site, can prove daunting. Your tiny flickering light showing your intention to change orientation, may go unnoticed and your hapless donkey be in mortal danger from some desperate traveller behind heading toward another religious experience, like a football match. Similar danger lurks if you wish to cross the path of on-coming pilgrims – unwise men and women heading in the wrong direction abound in these troubled times.

On entry to the site, your donkey may fall into the rut beside the path, a rut eroded by many tears and somewhat raggedly repaired by male penitents. Thus, having prayed for a safe haven you may now become somewhat disheartened and be unable to get out of the rut. This is where your off-road camel really comes into its own.

Rest and secure tethering are now needed for your donkey. Try to make your

pilgrimage after the community has celebrated one of its regular feast days of St Bee the Busy, patron saint of small-fiddly-jobs-that-accumulate-and-become-an-abomination, otherwise you may never emerge from the forest that besets you round. Worse, your donkey may gorge itself on the abundant weeds, with terrible consequences – indeed some asses have died of a surfeit, which can be a pain, especially for the ass.

Press on Pilgrim, but do not drop your guard – temptations abound in the nearby Hall and are so delightful that you may abandon your journey forever. Lapsed pilgrims will beguile you with their idle banter and badinage, and strong drink will befuddle the mind. Set your eyes on your avowed intent and these fancies will fly away.

At last you arrive at the door of the shrine, clothed in robes of virtue and awaiting the glory that will crown your journey:

welcome, pilgrim, and rejoice, for your journey has just begun.

Statue of Saint James the Great as the Moor slayer at the battle of Clavijo. copyright wikipedia commons



A reading from the Book of St Bee, the Busy, 8: 1 - 6

The Easter Morning Pilgrimage of the faithful, 2005

On Easter morn whilst it was still dark, some disciples rose from their beds and hastened to the temple. There, on the sand behind the temple, a fire made from the leaves of the eucalyptus wafted scented smoke toward heaven and warmed them. In that place, with the temple cat, the disciples huddled together in a circle, for the morn was damp and chilled.

2. And in the sacred space between night and morn, they prayed and sang songs to celebrate the light, and lit candles from the fire which they carried into the temple in a flickering procession. And they watched as the new Paschal candle was lit.

3. They praised God in song and prayer again, and received the new light of Christ from the Paschal candle. They rejoiced as the light of the font was turned on above them. And St Bee smiled upon the disciples as they declared that Christ had risen.

4. Later that morn, a multitude gathered at the temple and sat where they could find space. And verily, the multitude sang and clapped in a way that some declared was

not very Anglican. Then the priest dipped olive branches, newly plucked from the garden, in blessed water and joyously flung the water at the multitude, for as much as to baptise them over again. And joyful praise lifted the roof of the temple.

5. Having declared the Risen Christ and sung praises, the multitude gathered in a circle around the prayer mandala and danced the many coloured prayers into the universe.

6. Then God sent rain upon the garden, tears of joy for the Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

The Book of St Bee is being transcribed from papyrus scrolls by Gabrielle Dean.



To be a Pilgrim **John Bunyan 1628-88**

Who would true valour see,
let him come hither;
one here will constant be,
come wind, come weather.
There's no discouragement
shall make him once relent
his first avowed intent
to be a pilgrim.

Whoso beset him round
with dismal stories,
do but themselves confound;
his strength the more is.

No lion can him fright,
he'll with a giant fight,
but he will have a right
to be a pilgrim.

Hobgoblin nor foul fiend
can daunt his spirit;
he knows he at the end
shall life inherit.
Then fancies fly away;
he'll fear not what men say;
he'll labour night and day
to be a pilgrim.

*This popular hymn is set to a
traditional English melody, arranged
by Ralph Vaughan Williams 1872-1958.*



Pilgrimage and Popular Catholicism in Ireland by Beth Mooney

The *Book of Lismore*, an annal of the early Irish Church, observes that an ideal pilgrimage is one in which a person 'leaves his fatherland completely in body and in soul', and makes it clear that this 'leaving behind' of (preferably) one's native land had to be accompanied by a leaving behind of one's past sins and vices. The pilgrimage experience then, was a way of atonement, a penance and, in the early Irish Church, was the central religious ritual.

In the earliest centuries of the Irish Church pilgrims were typically male and frequently monks. Monks like *St Colmcille* (St Columba in English) who left Ireland around 557CE as penance for his part in a fraternal battle and established a monastery on the island of Iona just off the Scottish coast, but significantly and essentially, out of sight of his native land. Then for centuries throughout what has been called the Dark Ages, Irish monks went 'oversea' to Europe in particular, travelling, preaching, writing, copying, establishing monasteries far afield.

But pilgrimage took place too within Ireland and by the 12th century the practice of going overseas had given way to local pilgrimages undertaken by people who were not always monks but were still usually men. To places like wells and mountain tops and islands they went. Indeed, it has been estimated that prior to the mid-19th century there were 3000 holy wells in Ireland!

The most famous and enduring of these sites was St Patrick's Purgatory, on an island in a lake in remote Donegal in the north of Ireland. A pilgrim had to first appear before the Bishop of Armagh and gain his approval before proceeding to the

island. Once there he approached the Augustine prior, caretaker of the island, whose obligation it was to warn him of the dangers of proceeding further and of the traumas of his encounter with the 'otherworld' that he was likely to experience. The experience was expected by all concerned to be transformative. The pilgrim then fasted and prayed for fifteen days and the *Office of the Dead* was said on his behalf. Thus prepared, he was taken to a smaller nearby island to pray at a chapel there and then to the 'cave' where he was shut inside alone for 24 hours. It was here that the 'otherworld' was experienced (or not).



Dublin, Abbey Church, Ireland copyright flokke

By the early 1600's, pilgrims, now both male and female, were flocking to this site from all over Ireland and taking part in what were called 'rounding rituals'. Thousands of people over the centuries took part in these rites.. When they were attended by large numbers at particular sites on particular days of the year, they were referred to a 'patterns' – 16, 000 were recorded at St John's Well outside of



Dublin, while 12-15,000 attended in Ardmore (pop. under 1000) in 1832. In other words, they were great community and communitarian events.

To the angst of some (especially Protestant onlookers), these patterns also involved a definitely secular dimension. After the religious rites had been fulfilled, the participants set to having a very good time. Eating, drinking, carousing, even faction fighting were customary! On a personal level they were participated in with gusto and some pain - pilgrims frequently wore no shoes as they made their rounds over the stones. They said their *Pater Nosters* and their *Ave Marias* and they bled. Pain was integral to the experience. They were, after all, acts of penance.

But, by the mid 19th century and certainly after the Great Famine pilgrimages were, with few exceptions, a thing of the past. Just why pilgrimages rose to such prominence in Ireland is a subject in itself and tied, I think, inevitably to the tortured history of that blessed land, its social, political and religious divisions.

I joyfully recommend the following references to anyone who has an interest in this fascinating aspect of Irish religiosity:

Further Reading

Cahill, Thomas *How the Irish Saved Civilization: the untold story of Ireland's heroic role from the fall of Rome to the rise of medieval Europe* (Doubleday, New York, 1995)

Carroll, Michael P. *Irish Pilgrimage: holy wells and popular Catholic devotion* (John Hopkins university Press, Baltimore, 1999)

Lydon, James. *The Making of Ireland: from ancient times to the present* (Routledge, New York, 1998)

Celtic Blessing

May the blessing of light be on you - light without and light within.

May the blessed sunlight shine on you like a great peat fire, so that stranger and friend may come and warm himself at it.

And may light shine out of the two eyes of you, like a candle set in the window of a house, bidding the wanderer come in out of the storm.

And may the blessing of the rain be on you, may it beat upon your Spirit and wash it fair and clean, and leave there a shining pool where the blue of Heaven shines, and sometimes a star.



Tony7@@Morguefile.com Dingle Bay Ireland

And may the blessing of the earth be on you, soft under your feet as you pass along the roads, soft under you as you lie out on it, tired at the end of day; and may it rest easy over you when, at last, you lie out under it.

May it rest so lightly over you that your soul may be out from under it quickly; up and off and on its way to God.

And now may the Lord bless you, and bless you kindly. Amen.





Welcome to St Paul's Anglican Church, Beaconsfield, Western Australia
Our parish is a community that seeks God and the fullness of creation by finding ourselves in relation to others. Our giving to the common, to the other, our sharing of ourselves is our commitment to this endeavour

Sunday Service

9:15am

Morning & Evening prayer

6.30am & 6.30pm

Heartsong

First and Third Sunday of the month.

700pm

Fellowship of Contemplative Prayer

Second Thursday of the month

8pm

Rev. Peter Humphris Rectory/Office

9335 2242

Web: <http://www.stpaulsbeaconsfield.org.au>

Email: stpaul@iinet.net.au

A Prayer in the Spirit of St Paul

Creator of Life, of light and all Love, we pray thee to fill this house with thy Spirit.

Here may the strong renew their strength and seek for their working lives a noble consecration.

Here may the poor find succour and the friendless friendship.

Here may the tempted find power, the sorrowing comfort and the bereaved find the truth that death hath no dominion over their beloved.

Here let the fearing find a new courage and the doubting have their faith and hope confirmed.

Here may the careless be awakened and all that are oppressed be freed.

Hither may many be drawn by thy love and go hence, their doubts resolved and faith renewed, their sins forgiven and their hearts aflame with thy love.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

From the Chapel porch, Pleshey Retreat House, with amended divine address.