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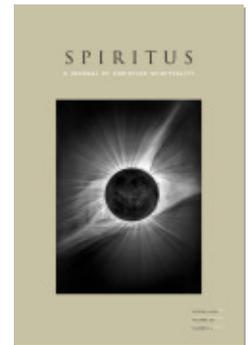
Pilgrimage

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Pilgrimage

Religion as a word points to that area of human experience where in one way or another a person comes upon mystery as a summons to pilgrimage.

Frederick Buechner, *A Room Called Remember: Uncollected Pieces*

Not all of the articles in this issue of *Spiritus* are explicitly about pilgrimage, yet all can be read in some sense as pilgrimage. Essentially, all writing is a kind of pilgrimage.

Having just returned from my own pilgrimage to Saint Benedict's Monastery in Minnesota, it is Cara Anthony's article that first catches my attention as I sit to compose this Introduction. Still, every article can be read as a summons to or from mystery. I find it fitting then to frame each introduction as pilgrimage, a soul journey undertaken by the authors in response to mystery's call.

Another bit of mystery that comes to mind is the beckoning of pilgrimage in the work of Michel de Certeau. Certeau's life was pilgrimage in praxis. As I listen to his discourse, I find that mystery is as much about wonder, as it is about nightmare. Certeau is every bit as honest about mysticism as Buechner is about religion born of mystery. Yes, nightmare and wonder, twin bed-children to the gods of mystery.

The first article is clearly about pilgrimage: "Walking as Resistance to Hypermobility: the Camino de Santiago Pilgrimage" by Cara Anthony. Cara declares a summons to pilgrimage from the start in the words in her title: "resistance," the nightmare-sounding word, "hypermobility," and "pilgrimage," itself seeking the mother of us all, "mystery." In Cara's prose, "hypermobility" not only sounds like a nightmare, it is a nightmare of a most contemporary kind; the resistance against which is provided in pilgrimage through the slow act of walking. Her husband, who provides the light and airy drawings, slows hypermobility with pen and paper. We are blessed to have both arts, writing and drawing, entwined in a married couple and consigned to resisting "hypermobility."

The essay and the drawings dauntlessly resist the nightmare of hypermobility, effectively a metaphor of homelessness, and offer a rendering of the pilgrimage summons as home.

Nuptial election and the election of religious life are mysteries that summon one to pilgrimage as well. In the sense that Buechner intends, they are both driven by the energy contained within mystery. In “Nuptial Election and the Ignatian Exercises,” Daniel and Jacqueline Cere follow the mystery of marriage as a pathway to Christ. All “elections” in the *Exercises* are thus intended, but only two are recognized as permanent, unchangeable elections: nuptial and religious life.

It might sound a bit out of step to consider the *Exercises* as a mystery that summons the pilgrimage of marriage. However, while often overlooked, marriage is the very definition of a summons, a core feature of election within the *Exercises* that “distinguishes it [*Exercises*] from other forms of prayer and spirituality approved by the church” (15). Election is a choosing, or recognition of the mystery that summons one into a life of astonishment and (again) nightmare which together form the pathway to Christ. Neither marriage nor the religious life is intended to idealize a particular path, as Ignatius was quick to point out. Both are, rather, “simple” walks of wonder on the way to Christ.

In the Ceres’ portrayal, the awe, mystery, and often darkness of the pilgrimage of marriage taps into deep veins in the Catholic tradition emphasizing the bridal nature of humanity’s relationship to Christ.¹ In fact, Pope Innocent III viewed the nuptial relationship as a key to unlock numerous primary mysteries of faith.²

The nuptial election, to become a bride of Christ, literally and metaphorically, unveils the shadows and lights of the mystery of our creation in the image and likeness of God. This is a summons. Unlike Camino, it is a pilgrimage without end, an immersion into deification, divine theosis, *epektasis*. Nuptial election: a dark, bold, and cold uncertainty? Yes. Nuptial election: a shared, illuminated, and amazing pilgrimage having something to do with love? Yes.

Mark Graves does a wonder-filled job of translating Buechner’s “mystery” into “Mystery” wherein, if “Mystery” is to be more than “another name for the unexplained and inexplicable, the person must participate in that Mystery for the concept to become useful in one’s world” (42–43). Pilgrimage is certainly a response to a summons from Mystery, but Graves has something much more in mind. In “Habits of Theological Reason in Spiritual Formation,” he expands the walking and movement of pilgrimage as one of many participative, formative ways of developing theological reasoning.

Graves’s article questions, “Given a contemporary understanding of the human mind, how does one develop a capacity for theological reasoning” (36) in such a way as not only to be summoned, but to interpret, to form viable habits and virtues, to recognize and receive grace, and to enhance spiritual development? Simply put, Graves follows a course of neuroscience, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Thomas Aquinas into and through the darkness and often

arbitrary fissures in the path of theological reasoning. This succession evolves from full-fledged participative pilgrimage into a type of spiritual formation that develops capacities for theological reasoning and builds bridges into Mystery.

The essay is rich in the history of theology and philosophy, Christian tradition of prayer, and contemporary texts of neuroscience, formation, and Mystery. Graves' work is a reach for Mystery, a pilgrimage that is Mystery, and one that hints, warns, even awakens as it summons.

In his enticingly titled essay, "Deadly Sins, Addiction, the Demonic, and Spirituality," Dennis Sansom brings us back, almost exclusively, to pilgrimage as nightmare. He begins, "I argue that the classical Christian teaching on the seven deadly sins, and a particular theological understanding of the demonic, can help clarify the power of addiction which begins with the corruption of thoughts about desires . . ." (63).

This corruption becomes the beginning of that pilgrimage we know as addiction. How does one move from deadly sin and addiction to regained charity and communion with God? Sansom strategically presents the main teachings on the deadly sins, emphasizing insights found in Evagrius of Pontus and Saint Thomas Aquinas followed by an analysis of why people become addicts, and the possible role of the demonic which he gleans from three theological accounts. While recognizing the need for medicine, therapy, and emotional support, Sansom also distinguishes the role of body, soul, and spirit in pursuit of both godly and rebellious aims. He concludes, ". . . the spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting (among others) orient our thinking toward charity to God, neighbor, and the world, and thus direct us on the path that brings human fulfillment" (76–77).

Deadly sins make for a deadly pilgrimage: one becomes exposed, disoriented, blind, narcissistic, traumatized, with innocence and desire snatched away rather like crows feasting on the eyes of the dead. In Sansom's reading, the broken, deadly pilgrimage can become a slow walk back toward community. There are practices, there are admissions of the forgotten, there are prayer and fasting, movements from broken, muddied and cobbled roads to something like a healing sea.

Through a meditation on icons, Daniel Wigner writes of another type of pilgrimage altogether. Wigner compares classic Eastern Orthodox icons with the use of icons within contemporary, Emergent Churches (EC). The pilgrimage engendered by classic icons, other than priestly movement in liturgical settings, are intentionally immobile. They resist, by their very nature and history, any mobility. Icons also employ the gaze serving as both window and mirror. Inactivity, yes, but a pilgrimage of the soul into the sacred "cones" set imperceptibly stable within the pupil of the eye. His article, "Icons: A Case Study in Spiritual Borrowing between Eastern Orthodoxy and the Emergent Church,"

meditates on the Byzantine icon that has managed to maintain a tradition, find stability in that tradition, and evolve within that same tradition into one of the most meditatively invitations to slow and see.

Simultaneously, Wigner looks into the evolution of the icon away from its liturgical and meditative tradition into streets and farms and broken-down shanties that constitute the EC today. Wigner's investigations and his questions are social and religio-secular. The phenomenon of the EC is that of "emergent" and as moving and new, pilgrim-moving. EC icons have traditional roots but the paths and ways are still somewhat "disappeared" and so the pilgrim, like any, good, honest pilgrim is lost, still finding "found." Icons, as Wigner shows, are good for companionship necessary for such a walk.

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What is spiritual borrowing? As Wigner explains, it is concerned with appropriation and reinterpretation. One can imagine Eastern Orthodox icons appropriated and reinterpreted in ways that the pilgrimage remains while absolutely every other little dapple and drop and meaning you can squeeze from the dry walk disappears in the cloud of radically different culture, place, ritual, landscape, clothing, and bird. All the while, disappointment and reappointment dissolve into a haze. Until, as these writers, each in their own way shows, "the deceptive mask and the operative trace of events that organize the present" . . . simply move on. "To practice space is thus to repeat the joyful and silent experience of childhood; it is, in a place, to be other and to move toward the other . . ." ³ drawn by the jubilant power of mystery.

As all of these writers have shown, each in their own way, pilgrimage opens space for self and other, for *anam cara*, the "soul friend" that John O'Donohue wrote about so beautifully and intimately. Pilgrimage opens space to organize the present and open space that befriends self and other. As O'Donohue writes, "*anam cara* is God's gift. Friendship is the nature of God. The Christian concept of Trinity is the most sublime articulation of otherness and intimacy." Our longings, as expressed so differently in each article, are grounded in Jesus' words: "Behold, I call you friend." And "Jesus, as the Son of all difference."⁴ May Jesus surround you in your longings and in your wanderings in the pilgrimage that is your life.

NOTES

1. Rabia Gregory, *Marrying Jesus in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2016) Hildegard E. Keller, *My Secret is Mine: Studies on Religion and Eros in the German Middle Ages*. Leuven: Peeters, 2000.
2. Connie Munk, *A Study of Pope Innocent III's Treatise "De Quadripartita specie nuptiarum"* (translation and commentary), University of Kansas, 1976.

3. Cf. Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Press, 1989), 3 and Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, “Part III: Spatial Practices”, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 91–130.
4. John O’Donohue, *Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 14–15.