

## Body Language II - Pilgrimage

This second "Body Language" article begins to get specific about the ways we use our bodies in prayer and worship\* and I want begin with an activity which use the entire body. A pilgrimage actually moves the body to a completely different place. That's an obvious thing to say, but it is significant because we're not used to our bodies actually moving in prayer. That, though is what is happening in a Pilgrimage. It is a moving prayer.

A Pilgrimage is itself an act of devotion to God. When we go on one, we are offering the time it takes to God for him to use. We may well be offering a good deal of effort to God too, especially if the Pilgrimage is undertaken on foot (and even more so if there are hills!)

Prayer is a matter of consciously putting ourselves in God's way and opening ourselves to him. When we do that we don't know what God will do but we give ourselves in trust, knowing that it cannot be bad because he loves us and "perfect love casts our fear". A pilgrimage is a classic example of giving ourselves to God over quite a long period. It will give us plenty of time to think and reflect and when we allow ourselves that meditative space, well, who knows where the Lord may lead us?

Secondly, a Pilgrimage is a model of life. Life is a process of moving and growing. We never stay still, things are always changing: We begin at birth and follow our journey towards God. Each step in life is a step closer to God. A pilgrimage is an active and immediate picture of this process.

Thirdly, life, the universe and everything look and feel different from different vantage points. A Pilgrimage changes the vantage point. It gives us the chance to look at life from somewhere else and that means we may well see something we hadn't noticed before. Maybe we'll see something from the point of view of someone we meet along the way; or from the historical standpoint of the place we make Pilgrimage to, or a Saint who's associated with that place; or maybe a travelling companion will say something new. Sharing a Pilgrimage can forge a powerful new bond with fellow pilgrims. All this can change us and move us a step or two further on the journey of life.

Finally, a Pilgrimage is another way of linking ourselves in with countless other Christians down the ages. Many millions have trod the path to Canterbury or Santiago, or Walsingham or St.Albans over the years and in so doing they have joined their prayers with those of St. Thomas or James or Mary or Alban or whoever it may be.

Next time you visit such a place of Pilgrimage try thinking of yourself as a Pilgrim rather than a tourist and make your journey a picture of the path to heaven.

**Michael Camp**

<p><b>Man's way leads to a hopeless end, God's way leads to an endless hope.</b></p>
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