

Year B, Proper 9

July 8, 2018

✠ In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

Well, I've been back a week, and everything is still OK.

I know how Jesus feels in this morning's Gospel reading. I really do. I've lived it. After three months of being away, I'm greeted with, "*Hi – where's Clark? We haven't seen him in ages! Is he OK?*" I'm really very happy that Clark, the cat, has made such a wonderful, lasting impression on you all.

So this is the first time I've been in the pulpit since April 8<sup>th</sup> – Easter Sunday. My sabbatical time away was perfect. Knowing that all would be well here, allowed us to leave with no worries, and allowed us to truly jump into "away mode" with both feet. Getting back into a work routine has been...interesting, but I am glad to be back.

I thought, instead of researching this morning's readings, I might share just a couple of experiences and thoughts that occurred to Kate and to me during, and after, our time away. We are still processing our experiences, weighing them...figuring out what they mean -and I think we will continue processing for a long time. As most of you know, we spent four days baking at the Cordon Bleu in Paris, we traveled in Poland, Germany, England and Scotland. But the biggest impact on us was our 200-mile pilgrimage walk on the Camino de Santiago de Compostela in Spain– it touched every aspect of our selves - physically, emotionally and spiritually.

We learned how little we really need for our journey – both the actual pilgrimage, and the journey of our lives, as well. We found that we brought more than we needed, and we had to carry it all 200 miles. I can't tell you how many times we would look at our packs and sighed, "I

wish I hadn't brought..." Because the weather turned out so different than we expected, we brought clothing we never wore. Rather than opting for simplicity, we tried to plan for every eventuality, and it just made our journey that much more complicated. Jesus had a lot to say about living simply: he told his disciples, "Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals..."<sup>1</sup> and he told the crowds, "do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear..." Jesus' advice might seem extreme in today's culture, but he has a good point. If you live simply, your life is that much less complicated...and perhaps there is that much less drama.

We found great joy in little things that we couldn't have imagined. Sitting in the shade of a tree, sipping a cup of coffee con leche with just a little cookie or piece of cake at mid-morning, the relief of just taking off your shoes after a long day. Kate and I fondly remember sitting on a patio at our hostel at the end of a day's walk having a cup of tea with an older British woman we befriended. She shared her chocolate bar and we shared our roll of McVitie's biscuits. It wasn't much of a patio, situated right on the edge of a cow pasture and it was threatening to rain...but it was so pleasant as we each shared the stories of our pilgrimages. And we remember being so cold on some nights, and how grateful we were for the pilgrim hostel that had a wood stove in the dorm room. We'll never forget the beauty of attending a Pilgrim's Mass in the tiny, unheated thousand-year-old church of Santa Maria in the village of Rabanal del Camino, and the majesty and glory of Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals in the larger towns. The magnificent landscapes and vistas as we crossed over Mount Irago, the highest point on the Camino. The fun and excitement of making new friends from all over the world and crossing their paths over and over

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 10:4

throughout the pilgrimage. And I couldn't help but be reminded that it's a small, beautiful world that God created... and we are all God's children.

I also learned that no one is so important that life doesn't just stop when we're not around. I look at all of you, and I hear the wonderful reports of Fr. Paul and Nancy and the Vestry's work while I was away, and I am so grateful for all of you, and for the leadership of this parish. We trusted that all would be well. I trusted in you, and we all trusted that the Holy Spirit would continue to sustain, lead and guide St. Alban's – pushing us ever in the direction that God wills. Sending our mission team off to Appalachia this morning to work to better the lives of a few residents there hearkens back to Jesus sending out the 70 disciples to heal and to offer hope – and that's a good part of the Christian mission.

Kate and I are so thankful...so grateful for this once in a lifetime experience. I've missed you all. And I've missed the work. I'm back, refreshed and ready to do whatever, be whatever, and go wherever, God calls us.

AMEN

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam