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Talk # 1

Introduction to Pilgrimage: Being Pilgrims and Strangers

1. Pause and think: where am I going right now?
2. If Jesus is a pilgrim, where is he going? What about his life is *pilgrimage*?
3. How do I feel about this group here in this auditorium? Look around at us. What am I feeling right now about this vast crowd? How do I feel about this group *in my best moments*? Do they differ, these assessments?
4. Why did I come here, to this conference?
5. Itinerancy and pilgrimage are compared; we chose to talk about pilgrimage but what aspects of pilgrimage are also shared by the notion of itinerancy? Which is the more radical?
6. Joanne says, "Thus a pilgrim is one who travels", but she leaves off the notion of "through a place". Talk about how this place affects you.
7. What do I want to happen to me while *here*?
8. Am I open to being grasped (do I even like being touched?) during this experience or am I an observer. Most of us are introverts (research on religious) who like to take in before giving out.
9. What have I noticed already about myself, us, in this place? What of what I have already experienced do I find different? Is the difference a positive thing, a negative thing or just a thing?
10. So, this is a stopover on a much broader journey (my life, vocation, mission).
11. The formation of the Federation, the writing of a new rule, the decision to develop new structures for the Federation.
12. As 3rd Order Religious, how does my vocation differ/contrast/complement that of Francis and the First Order Brothers?
13. What are my needs as I come here? How often have I asked for assistance/alms on this journey?
14. How is my sense of gratitude affected these days?
15. How does the rapid change of our lives over these past 40+ years affect me and the way I live my life?

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16. Does poverty stir feelings of shame in me? Are we so eager to end poverty that we fail to appreciate the way being poor is/can be a blessing?
17. Clare writes: "but with swift pace, light step, unswerving feet, so that even your steps stir up no dust, . . ." This is a description of radical freedom, not counting the cost, with one's vision fixed on what lies ahead.
18. Joanne, quoting Joe Doyno, OFM, describes the enclosure at San Damiano where there is a "spirit-filled insecurity". This suggests the statement, "they can take everything from me but my freedom to take a stance toward what I experience" made by Viktor Frankl in Man's Search for Meaning, the basis for Logotherapy. Those who lost this ability in the concentration camps rarely survived.
19. The accoutrements of a pilgrim: identifiable garb, something for support, little baggage, serious about the trek (the hat). On page 6 Joanne names the logo defining a pilgrim's destination. For us Franciscans it is becoming the Tau: symbol of conversion, being marked/grasped, heading toward the ultimate goal.
20. How we hear the instructions can defeat the wisdom being offered. E.g., no one actually believes how strenuous the journey is on pilgrimage. We must see the challenge by not interpreting it in light of our own world.
21. In "simplicity" on page 6, Joanne suggests: the value of the singular as compared to the many. One thing becomes the window to everything. Poverty as virtue!
22. Jesus journeyed *with the disciples* as one of them, although the leader. He sought the crowds where they were likely to gather.
23. We are so in love with our history as a *movement* in the Church these days that we often speak more of being Franciscan than of being Christian or even human.
24. Francis and Clare, faces upturned, eyes fixed on Jesus, *in the company of other saints!*
25. Become conscious of that place from which I view the experience of my life. From out of this world, my congregation, my Federation, my Franciscanism, my Christianity, my humanity (as brothers and sisters to every person).
26. Letting go of my grip on reality . . . so as to experience another reality . . . THE REALITY!
27. How do I enter a place?

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Talk 2

Penitential Pilgrimage

1. Joanne points out (what Kathleen Moffat's work revealed to her) that there were Medieval "structures of penitence" such as (a) rebuilding churches; (b) fasting; (c) wearing sackcloth; (d) not taking up arms; (e) proclaiming one's sins publicly. This is an attempt to realize God's Reign in one's life because one has come into an awareness of how one has caused dis-order in the universe.

Penitents are attempting to press against the forces of chaos that disintegrate the stream of life.

Thus, we have a structural context within which we find our frame of reference and "live and move and have our being".

How do we conceptualize this in our own day?

2. Medievals had a sense of GUILT. Do we feel guilty any more or have we absolved ourselves of guilt (Whatever Happened to Sin? by Karl Menninger)?

Are we so fragile in our psychic structure that we cannot allow ourselves to experience guilt? We have emerged from a context (pre-conciliar) that while not happy with guilt was certainly familiar with it. Now we preach (teach, assure) self-acceptance. Is it time (and have we healed enough from the false guilt we were bathed in) to acknowledge "responsibility" for sin—ours and the structural kind—so that we can feel ready to embark on a penitential project?

People who have been traumatized often repress the offending memory to preserve some semblance of normalcy. Yet the repressed memory remains and continues to affect their lives (and requires great energy from the ego to be maintained) thus robbing them of precious energy with which to live life fully. Do we have a contemporary language of Guilt? A contemporary vocabulary of Guilt?

3. Our forebears believed in objective evil that required they be protected. Some of the "penitence" they exercised was as protection against evil. We now speak of structural sin, somewhat more objective than personal sin. We work against this objective evil rather than engage in acts of penitence to protect ourselves from it.
4. The **second baptism** idea suggests entering in to a different mode of being, one that is distinctly different from the former life and prized for that reason. It represents **the road not taken** (to put that phrase in another context) in order to emphasize the commitment to a reformed way of being.
5. The penitential pilgrimage imposed for **scandalous sins** implied a different kind of social situation from ours today. In a close-knit society everyone's business

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6. **Judicial penitential pilgrimages** implied the existence of a social norm together with a judicial authority to impose that norm. Who could impose a penitential pilgrimage on anyone today? Would it be seen as an improper imposition of religion on life? Does anyone today need to make up for his or her being a force for disintegration for our society?
7. Those who "wander from obedience" today might be hard to identify. Perhaps that class of persons identified as pedophiles might qualify. We haven't yet found a good way to deal with this issue. But some "structures" are emerging.
8. Making out a will before going on pilgrimage is one of those rites of passage as we move into the liminality phase. We do that when we make our profession of vows in religious life. We leave "home and family", but have we really done that as we set off on our penitential style of life.

A fundamental difference between the penitential pilgrimage and religious life is that the former was time limited whereas the latter is a lifetime event. After a while one becomes so familiar with the "lifestyle" that it no longer appears to be distinctly different. Thus we are always in need of "beginning again" to do what we set out to do.

9. **Travel out of a sense of poverty** raises the issue of how we handle money these days (and its surrogate, the ever present credit card). We have these things "just in case" something should happen. But isn't that one of the things that is of the essence of the penitential pilgrimage: anything could (and we hope would) happen? The measure of our fortitude is how we deal with the unexpected.
10. **Making amends** suggests the spirituality of AA and SAA and other programs that still place this value before their clients. Make a list of all those I have offended and make amends insofar as is possible. Saying "five Our Fathers and five Hail Mary's" is not my idea of making amends. This requires encounter with the one offended and genuine reconciliation where possible.
11. Joanne describes how the penitential pilgrim "**throws away his weapons and wanders far and wide**" giving a clear sign of being "on pilgrimage". How do we look to the rest of society? Would they be able to describe us in a way that would be roughly equivalent to that of a medieval penitential pilgrim?
12. Re: Scott Peck's book, People of the Lie, how do we feel about being included among the racists and power mongers? Franciscan Action Network is responding to the wisdom of other nations by **dealing with our own government's policies** in addition to offering direct assistance to peoples in need. Are we resentful and

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bruised when people tell us our society/culture is oppressive? Do we blame the culture but absolve ourselves personally?

13. Michael Cusato's **definition of sin today** raises the question whether we have any structures to identify and distance ourselves from our personal and corporate sin. I am thinking of something like the chapter of faults or self proclamation or some such way of prodding ourselves to keep dealing with the temptation to lie to ourselves about our virtue or vice.

At Poggio Bustone Francis confronted his sinfulness and **asked repeatedly for forgiveness**. He then experienced God's love and was then able to identify the goodness in others (buon giorno, buona gente). He became a genuinely affirming person, surprising people who didn't think of themselves as worthy (even if the brother doesn't ask for forgiveness, ask him if he wants it).

Coming to grips with sin means coming to grip with one's self. What structures do we have that require us to do this?

Is living alone rather than in common, so prevalent today, really a veiled way of avoiding troublesome others in our communities and thus depriving ourselves (and the troublesome others) of the hard reality of confrontation and conversion?

14. Joanne describes Francis' experience at Poggio Bustone and his repetition of "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." He is clearly asking for forgiveness. How do we feel about the sacrament of reconciliation (and how does our attitude toward the male, celibate clergy defend us against actually asking for forgiveness)?
15. **God is God and we are not.** A good summary of AA Spirituality.
16. About being inconvenienced: do I embrace the opportunities that present themselves to experience inconvenience?
17. Mary E. Imler's reference to Francis being called to "restore a church, to rebuild a house" suggests the biblical image of Jesus being of the house and lineage of David. Jesus asks Francis to rebuild "my" house. This might be code for rebuilding the human community (too easily co-opted and limited to a self-serving rebuilding of the Church).
18. **Embracing our own sinfulness** is a phrase Joanne used; but what does it mean?
19. Choosing **to live or not to live in relationship** raises the question of how we address the movement of the Spirit today to globalize (collapsing congregations, provinces, organizations and giving up our independence to one another)?

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Talk #3

Pilgrimage of Healing

1. Assumptions about illness and healing: Sin is the cause of illness; the Devil is the cause of (mental) illness; God is the cause of illness (perhaps to punish but also to make us stronger).
2. Underlying assumption is the Body, Mind and Spirit triad; we express our SELF through body and mind. Sometimes a "sick" self leads to a sick body and/or a sick mind.
3. The tomb of a saint is a kind of "axis mundi". The Basilica of St. Francis is a "nuclear reactor" built to house the radioactive rods (the body of St. Francis). When the body is lowered down into the depths of the Basilica (like the radioactive rods being inserted into the heart of the reactor) the whole place becomes an energy factory—a point where we can access divine energy through contact with the sacred remains of the saint and through his/her divinely effective intercession.
4. The Rood Screen was removed from the Basilica in 1300 (according to Joanne's notes). This is the first Holy Year declared by Boniface VIII. This made it possible to get closer to the (radioactive) core of the Basilica-reactor for the multitude of pilgrims expected during that Holy Year. Understanding the process of healing as requiring conversion, the Friars of the Basilica directed the flow of traffic down the nave of the Basilica and then to the right through the Chapel of St. Mary Magdalene, the Penitent par excellence. Healing follows penitence.
5. Hospices were operated many times by monasteries of monks who for the most part were not priests (and therefore not bound by the ecclesiastical prohibition directed at priests who practiced medicine). Reference [The Pillars of the Earth](#) novel.
6. Monotony and boredom were sometimes the greatest challenge (while on pilgrimage) according to Joanne. But monotony and boredom encountered while walking long distances along the traditional pilgrim routes could lead a pilgrim into the "liminality" that might be the perceived necessary condition for movement into a transcendent healing state.
7. The care given at hospices and leprosaria was motivated by a desire to encounter the Christ in the person of the pilgrim. Thus, in calling ourselves pilgrims and strangers we are affirming our belief that we are the pilgrim AND the stranger; we are "the Christ" when we are welcomed in charity. Are we willing to allow ourselves to experience being the stranger and embracing all the discomfort and contingency that being a stranger implies.

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8. Healing understood in the Franciscan Tradition (cf. page 4 in Joanne's notes) is actually transformation into Christ not healing understood in the sense of getting better or being cured of something. Neither Francis nor Clare was ever found to have been physically or emotionally healed of anything (neither was Jesus spared the suffering of the cross); rather each passed through death (like Jesus) to a new form of life

Healing is the ability to praise God and have hope in the face of struggle, illness, turmoil.

I was asked a simple question at La Verna: 'was Francis a happy man?' He had gone there to experience two things: (1) the sufferings Jesus endured; (2) the love that would make a person embrace such suffering for another. He did experience both of these graces. He left La Verna after writing the Praises of God and when he got to San Damiano he wrote the Canticle of the Creatures. He wanted to embark on a new preaching tour despite the ravages of the illness he was undergoing and the limitations of the stigmata. He appeared to be happy.

But what is happiness? Tell the story of the father and mother of a child born with internal organs missing and parts of his brain not there. Happiness is far more than what most commercials for products displayed on television offer or suggest. It is something that happens when we have passed through to a new level of being; torn open, bleeding, loving. Yes, Francis was a happy man!

9. Referencing "the ill" Joanne offers several examples of what Franciscans can expect during illness: (1) not healing as such but support while suffering/enduring an illness; (2) having our needs provided for at the expense of the community who begs on our behalf; (3) being given certain liberties by the brothers and sisters to allow for our state of illness; (4) being extended special courtesies by the brothers and sisters despite the rule's requirements.
10. Some believe God heals through direct intervention; some believe God heals through human mediation (medicine, physicians, etc.). These are changes of perspective or emphasis reflecting diverse cosmologies.

We have witnessed dramatic advances in the human capability of extending healing to those afflicted with illness. We have been "marketed to" by the medical world and we are eager consumers of their "product". In my lifetime I have witnessed a growing preoccupation with self among most of us in the "first world". But is this realistic for people baptized in Christ? Should not our first priority be the healing that comes from living the Gospel? Would we not expect to find ourselves living more and more in the Reign of God? Resurrected?

Wouldn't our healing be more like that of Francis and Clare? Perhaps to learn not to fear illness (ours or others) and be brave enough to enter it non-defensively?

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Talk #4

Pilgrimage of Transformation

1. Joanne cites Celano's (Omnibus, page 234) description of the change that took place in Francis at a deep personal level, "core change", upon emerging from the caves.

Such a core change is only gradually revealed. It is unrepeatable, i.e., my pilgrimage is not your pilgrimage even though we may pass through the same territory.

2. Joanne describes some images that help to think about transformation; the sunrise and the snowfall, while beautiful images, do not describe a real change, only a perceived change. The **Body Worlds** by Guenther Von Hagens image describes an evolutionary change in human cellular differentiation. The adjectives that describe transformation (splendor, radiant, revelatory, beauty unleashed, miraculous fragility, dynamic and responsibility) are wonderfully descriptive and come closer to the type of transformation (in Christ) that we are trying to access by living the evangelical life.
3. Joyce Rupp (Walk in a Relaxed Manner) touches on the experience of endlessly walking and holding "onto the hand of the Great Pilgrim". This suggests, again, the experience of moving into a trancelike liminality spoken of earlier.
4. Joanne says, "the underlying desire of every pilgrim is to be transformed by the experience". Is this also why we entered religious life? Do we really want this to happen or are we holding on to an idea we have (perhaps a false idea) of our "self" and perhaps resisting real transformation?

In 1991 David Nygren and Miriam Ukeritis did a massive study of religious life. Among many questions they asked were two sets: (1) one set asked us about our commitment to work for the poor and disenfranchised; (2) the other asked us if we were willing to live among the poor and disenfranchised. We answered the first question with a resounding "yes!" Our response to the second was almost as strong a "no!" That was more than 15 years ago; have we moved any in the intervening years?

5. The earthquake pilgrimage of 1997 jarred us loose from our moorings. Perhaps confronting "death" helps us break free of our false images and brings us directly into the presence of God.
6. Quoting Sellnar (page 27), Joanne invites us to consider that, "The focus is on the sacred journey . . . on deepening their spirituality, not just for themselves but for the families and communities to which we belong. This describes a yearning for a transformation of self (the present) and of the species (the future)." Perhaps this

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- yearning is the Spirit praying within us when we don't know how to pray in words. It is an affirmation of hope. And God will not leave us disappointed.
7. Joanne cites Ilia Delio, OSF, "To attain the height of mystical union is not to transcend the world and become absorbed in God; rather, it is to become, like Francis, an alter Christus . . . Mystical union is to manifest cruciform love." Perhaps this is the real "healing" we desire more than any physical healing.
 8. Joanne cites Murray Bodo, OFM, in the docudrama *Reluctant Saint*, "A compassionate God moves toward a suffering and disillusioned Francis and the moment of convergence we call Stigmata." This is a blossoming, a healing.
 9. Perhaps another definition of healing (flowing from Joanne's references to Francis and the Sultan) is conversion to the Reign of God.
 10. After the death of Francis, Joanne notes, many things changed in the Order(s) he had founded. These historical events can be construed as centrifugal, chaotic, counter-kingdom. But these events bring about an evolution in the Order's understanding of itself that, in the long run, could be seen as moving us beyond Francis and Clare toward something neither of them could have imagined. Thus part of what we can draw from this series of events is a greater respect for all of history as the place within which God is acting to transform us all. Mysteriously.
 11. Joanne says, "We can't plan transformation". We must "suffer it", "undergo it", "submit to it", and then perhaps embrace it. It is that "not I, but Christ lives in me" to quote St. Paul.
 12. Reiterating Doris Donnelley, Joanne says we must "nurture and embrace the internal dynamic" that leads to transformation. We are not "playing at" transformation, but we desire to undergo it.
 13. We are being transformed (from glory to glory) passively acted upon by the Spirit of the Living God who prays within us in ways we don't know how to do. All we can do is discern the next step. The rest is shrouded in mystery.