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SF 505: Formation for Ministry

Pilgrimage Journal

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The pilgrimage on the Camino was one of the highlights of my life. I experienced God in a new way through a simple mode of transit: walking. Going into this trip, I knew that it would be physically challenging, but I also knew that it was going to be rewarding. Through hearing testimonies of encountering God on the Camino, I was expectant to encounter Him in the midst of physical exertion. Each day as we walked along, there were different roads – some uphill, some downhill. Days when it rained, and days when the sun shone. All throughout the 119 kilometers that we walked, there were moments of silence and hours of long conversations with friends and strangers. Walking the Camino was like a metaphor of walking with Jesus, and it has taught me so many lessons that I will carry with me for years to come.

One of the most difficult things that we had to overcome on the walk were hills. Going uphill and downhill were difficult in their own ways. Going uphill was just pure physical exertion. But going downhill, I had to be a little more careful. I had to be mindful of how my body was engaging the ground so that my joints – ankles and knees – would not get damaged. I had to land on the ground softly and bend my knees slightly so that the impact would not put pressure on areas of my body that were weak. I had to adjust myself so I wouldn't get hurt. Listening to my body was one of the most important things to keep in mind while walking the Camino because if I didn't, I wouldn't last. Isn't this like our spiritual journey? Going uphill means that we need to push through. There is no other way, but through. There are no shortcuts, and no easy way out. And then there are moments when we need to adjust our routines, adjust

our position, and listen to our soul. What is it that we need in this season? What are the areas of weakness that I need to be aware of and need to supplement so that I don't hurt myself? We need to be aware of our weaknesses so that we can ask God for His grace that supplies every need to cover those weaknesses. We need His wisdom to guide us through difficult things. Going downhill seems easy, but it requires me to engage more of my thoughts and be intentional with every step so that I don't slip and fall or land harshly on my feet and in doing so, damage my joints. Walking with Jesus means that we are in step with Him, and He never lets us slip and fall. When we slip and fall, that means we weren't paying attention to our soul needs and lost sight of Jesus.

Another impactful lesson I learned on the Camino was rest. Every day, we rested. After hours and hours of treading through dirt paths, roads, hills, and the rain, we needed to rest. On the way, there were opportunities to take breaks at cafes. One of the days, there was a chapel at the top of the hill, and I was so thankful for that little chapel so I could rest and sit in the presence of God for 15 minutes. Rest was required so that we could recover and do it all over again the next day. Rest is required for longevity. On the Camino, rest looked like spending a few hours lounging in a pool, sitting in a hot spring, hydrating, eating food, having a meaningful conversation with a friend, tending to any wounds, massaging any muscle aches, taking a shower, or simply just taking a nap. We also needed a good night's rest so that our bodies could recover in the way it was created to. My rest looked different every day depending on what my body needed. This is like our daily spiritual rhythm of rest.

Our soul needs to rest daily. God made us in His image which means, body, soul, and spirit are reflective of who He is. It is in union with each other, and they are not separate from each other. We can see so clearly the physical needs of our body, but we are not so quick to see

what our soul needs. The lesson of physical rest that I learned on the Camino was important for me to see that my soul needs rest in the same way on a daily basis. I tend to ignore my soul needs and power through things that “need to get done”. I don’t realize that throughout the day, I have taken blows. I have walked through dirt paths, roads, hills, and the rain. And I need to rest and recover, so that tomorrow, I can do it again and not break down. Rest for my soul means to be in vital union with Christ and to let Him tend to my wounds. And I need to be aware and prioritize that time to evaluate and sit down with the Great Physician of my soul.

A longer period of rest is also required periodically. When we came back home and I got to sleep in my own bed, the aches and exhaustion hit me like a truck. I never experienced this level of exhaustion and pain even after walking 17 miles on the Camino. It was like my body was holding it all together until I gave it the time and space to relax. I was sick with fatigue, experienced fever and chills, and had a pounding migraine all throughout. I spent the whole day sleeping until I had to get up for family plans. Miraculously, the next day I felt like I could walk the Camino again. Our souls need this too especially after a season of running on full capacity. I have begun to implement the spiritual discipline of quarterly retreats into my life, and it has changed my life. When we intentionally give ourselves time and space to rest, it gives room for the Spirit to highlight the blindspots that we’ve been missing. When longer periods of rest become a discipline, we no longer need to chase after rest because we are burning out. The discipline of rest serves us out of abundance and not lack.

These three lessons of learning how to push uphill and tread carefully downhill, tending to our soul needs daily, and giving space for longer periods of rest quarterly landed in my heart more deeply because I experienced it very physically. The revelation that our bodies are in union with our soul helped me see that what we experience physically is a mirror to how we experience

things in our soul. Walking with Jesus means that our body, soul, and spirit are in alignment with Him. The Camino de Santiago is translated to the Way of Saint James. We were all pilgrims on our way to Santiago de Compostela, and we walked 119 km following a yellow shell and a yellow arrow to get there. That's faith! That journey is a metaphor of our journey with Christ. Jesus says that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him. He is our Guide and our Path. He is the Way. We follow Him because we can trust Him. The Holy Spirit accompanies us from one arrow to the next. And we are all on our way to the Father in the City of God.