



The God Walk has truly been a formative and inspiring experience for all involved, including the countless people we meet along the road with whom we exchange stories.

Day eight is our day of “Culmination and New Beginning.” Here we reached the end of our god walk but only the beginning of the greater GOD WALK for which this week has been a preparation. This is the overarching theme of the day, a theme of celebration on both fronts.



*Taking up the Cross every day.*

The day started with waking and getting ready for the final walk that would bring us to Carmel Mission Basilica. After morning reflections and prayers our feet hit the road, down out of Carmel Valley where we had been given the greatest of hospitality from the Staff and Pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church (Carmel Valley). We walked the country road with our Pilgrim Cross, and all were in good spirits.



*Vista point*

Along the road, as you can imagine, we commanded a reaction out of many who passed us on the road. It’s hard to ignore a group of young people walking down the street wearing bright orange hats (for safety) and carrying a large wooden cross. And not for the first time we were approached by someone who was really touched by our witness.

A woman, who passed us on the road, turned around and parked near our support vehicle in order to greet us when we reached that point. She started off with the usual question to the effect of, “What are you doing this for, why are you carrying this cross?” And to that we all fumbled out our answer describing the God Walk as “something between a retreat, a walk-o-thon, a pilgrimage, a service project” and whatever other spin the God Walkers felt inclined to put on the experience. Then, very happy to see such a testimony, this woman offered each a different question, directed to our individual spiritual experience. She asked one by one, “what has brought you to Christ?” We all offered our varying responses, most of which testified to a movement of God throughout our lives and through the example and inspiration found in community.

She then began to tell us freely of her tragic history, a history of abuse and hypocrisy. She told us of how her family had abused her for years, yet she was being raised “in the church” to make it seem as if everything was fine to onlookers. She then told of how she had continued her life “in the church” but was not truly living

the life of Christ in her heart. Then tragedy struck which have her a renewed perspective on the life of faith. She was able to overcome much of the hurt and scars of her past, and live a life of love and forgiveness through an authentic faith in relationship with Christ. She then continued to encourage us to live a life in faith and love of God and to never give it up. After all of our conversation when she was about to leave she asked us if we would pray with her, to which we all willingly accepted. We all placed our hands on the cross we had been carrying and shared a moment of grace and blessing for the journey as she lead us in prayer. After parting greetings she was off like an angel come simply to bring a message of hope and grace.

Then we continued down the road toward our destination passing rhymes, songs and jokes between us as well as taking turns carrying the cross. We arrived at the mission with enough time that the team could break up and do a little browsing around the mission grounds. We then meet together in front of the Mission Basilica to talk with the celebrant about the blessing rite we were to participate during their 5:30 liturgy and our Closing/New Beginning liturgy (“Culmination and New Beginning”).



*Arrival at Mission Carmel*

We processed in with our pilgrim cross bearing the signatures of approximately 230 people who we had meet along the road throughout the week to the entrance song between the cross bearers, ministers and the Celebrant. Bowing with the rest of the procession we placed our Pilgrim Cross before the sanctuary (off to the side) and took our places among the congregation.

We then were introduced by the celebrant to the assembly. There we participated in the rest of the liturgy. Then after communion and the communion meditation we were invited up by the Celebrant to stand before the sanctuary to receive a blessing. The proceeded to bless our individual crosses and then give us the “Blessing of Pilgrims Before They Return” along with the entire congregation. We were honored to receive such a blessing and it truly capped the experience as well as invigorate us to continue on living the mission we had been given by Christ to be “the servants of the rest.” After the Celebrant blessed the entire congregation we participated again, with our pilgrim cross, in the recession out the doors of the Basilica. There we were greeted after mass with many who were intrigued with our mission and our work.



After final pictures, a closing prayer and goodbyes we all departed to our respective parts of the globe empowered to make of it a new creation and spread God’s love and joy wherever our feet fall.

● Perrin Brady