

GOD WALK SAN JOSE

Pilgrim's Journal

Day 1 - April 28th, 2005

Remembrance and Preparation

Perrin Brady
5/2/05

Before we set out on our journey toward compassion the God Walk had a taste of the history of liberation. We convened at St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church in San



Jose to celebrate the Passover Feast in the Spirit of the God Walk.

This was a prayerful and significant celebration of God's action in the world on

behalf of the oppressed and forgotten. As part of the Judeo Christian tradition this meal bears much significance to us pilgrims. We see this God acting on behalf of the enslaved Hebrew People as the same God who continues God's work in Jesus Christ. And we remember that Jesus and the disciples, in celebrating this same meal in remembrance of God's liberating actions, brought to it new salvific significance.

We discussed together the connection between this feast and our preparation to embark on the God Walk San Jose. The youth related that just as the Hebrew People were preparing to embark on their journey so were we preparing to make a pilgrimage. They believed that just as the Hebrew people were journeying toward the Promised Land so we too were making a journey toward the Promised Land, or in other terms, the Kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed. By this they did not mean simply their eternal reward in the here-after. No. We believe that, as Jesus proclaimed, "The Kingdom of God is among you." The kingdom of God, or even heaven, is not simply an abstract place that we go after death. It is a concrete reality that breaks forth into *this* world when the people of God claim this reality and walk in God's Love and Light, making real, physical, sacrificial,



challenging, and relevant motions for peace, unity and the sacredness of all peoples and all creation.

This was all discussed over the meal part of the Passover feast, and many insights were gained into the significance of these events.

After the meal we all began to prepare for the journey, in the manner of preparing for our first service project for the next day. We made signs for the festival that we were co-staffing with the Luther Burbank School. This was a Literacy Festival wrapped up in a Cinco de Mayo theme.

After preparations were complete all went home to catch a few Zs before the journey ahead.



DAY 2 – April 29th, 2005

Literacy and Homelessness

Perrin Brady
5/3/05

Early Saturday Morning we gathered together at St. Martin of Tours in San Jose to begin our pilgrim's journey. We congregated in the church for a liturgy of the Word and missionary-pilgrims blessing presided over by Fr. Jack Bonsor of St. Martin's.

There we read Jesus' proclamation of the ministry he has just begun and was being "fulfilled in your hearing" when he unrolled the scroll in the synagogue at Nazareth and read from the book of Isaiah:

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me
Because the Lord has anointed me
He has sent me to bring
glad tidings to the poor
To proclaim liberty to the captives
Recovery of sight to the blind
And release to prisoners
To announce a year
of favor from the Lord"

Miriam gave a talk on this reading about how we are sent with the same Spirit to serve the people of our community on a mission of healing. She also related that we may

encounter opposition from those who do not know what we are doing, or who do not understand our mission, just as Jesus experienced opposition from the people in his home synagogue, but that we must be courageous and steadfast to the mission at hand and the purpose for which we have been sent: To proclaim God's love and God's Kingdom with our actions.



After her talk we received our pilgrims blessing from Fr. Jack and from each other as a mutual blessing. He then blessed our Pilgrim Cross and presented it to us charging us in the Blessings:

“Receive the sign of Christ’s love and our faith.
By your humble service and walk of solidarity,
Preach Christ crucified and risen,
Who is the power and wisdom of God.”

So we were off to our first destination with great anticipation and excitement. We walked about ¾ of a mile down San Carlos to Luther Burbank School. There



preparations were already underway for the Cinco De Mayo school festival which was jointly staffed by God Walk and School volunteers.

The Cinco de Mayo festival (as mentioned in the Day 1 reflection) was both a cultural festival as well as a Literacy Festival, encouraging literacy among the communities and families in the area. Free children's story books were distributed provided by the school, and there were many activities and carnival games available for kids and youth of all ages.

The God Walkers had a wonderful time celebrating and connecting with the youth of this community. As Michelle shared, “The kids were really creative. The kid’s are always creative. *I love it!*”

Toward the middle of the festival Alex Vo, our guest motivational presenter from St. Maria Goretti, did a great job of connecting with the children and youth of Luther Burbank School with his comedy dance routine, wrapped up in a talk to motivate the children and youth to dream big.



“The kids are always creative. *I love it!*”

Then came the live Mariachi band provided by the effort of the School, as well as an ethnic costume parade. The diversity of the festival was a meaningful and prayerful reflection. Cristina shared that she found it nourishing spiritually to see “the different ways God has placed people in the world.”

We were very appreciative of Luther Burbank School for collaborating with us in providing such a worth while community building experience.

After that great experience we were off to Down Town San Jose, and St. Joseph’s Cathedral Basilica. The walk took us by many different types of neighborhoods and down streets we were not all familiar with. We all experienced San Jose a little differently while we were on the God Walk. I, for one, seemed to be walking through an entirely different community than I thought I knew, and an entirely different environment and ambiance. As Fiona put it, it was “different because you take it from a pedestrian’s point of view.”

When we arrived at the Cathedral there was a wedding in its final stages. So we decided to pray on the stops of the cathedral rather than wait until the wedding events were over. We gathered into a circle and prayed for continued strength and blessing upon our journey, for God to bless the Church of San Jose (who’s home we were at), and that St. Joseph guardian of the church would protect us and guide us along our way as a foster father to us, the body of Christ.



From there we were off to our lodging for the night at the Emergency Housing Consortium off Little Orchard in San

Jose. This was a long walk, but it gave the team a chance to reflect, sing songs, tell jokes, tell more bad jokes, and, tell even more and even worse jokes. All of this served to create a strong bond between the pilgrims.

We walked again through many different types of communities which varied greatly in apparent economic affluence. For Travis, this change toward more low income neighborhoods seemed natural

as his thinking would have him believe that this is where the Homeless Shelter most likely would be located. But then as we got closer it changed back to 'nicer' surroundings. As Travis put it, "I was kinda' afraid going through...the 'ghetto' area. But when we got to the shelter it was cool."

Jesus was not shy to walk bare foot where many were afraid to venture

Travis thought of this as an experience much like that of Jesus' own mission. He said that Jesus might have set out on a journey with one expectation only to find things much different or even surprising in the end. And Jesus was not shy to walk bare foot where many were afraid to venture.

When we reached Emergency Housing Consortium we were immediately ushered to the dining hall as we were already late for dinner. After dinner we were oriented by the staff at EHC, who guided us through the same intake process that other's must go through in order to stay the night at EHC.



We then spoke of the reality of Homelessness in Silicon Valley, and about the diversity of reasons people have for being homeless (not always the classic stereotypes). They then outlined the services they provide and gave us a tour of their facilities.

We were all very impressed at the level of cleanliness and organization demonstrated at EHC. As Adam said, "When we went to the homeless shelter - I had never been to a place like that - I didn't expect it to be as nice as it was. Usually you underestimate the quality of the place."

We were also impressed with the extent of the services that are provided there, which goes along with the establishment's apparent motto: "EHC, life builders." "Homeless shelters can do a lot more for people than

what you expected" said Ken. We say that they did not only provide emergency housing, but also life skills training, different options for moving to more long term yet still temporary housing, job interview skills, and follow up. They also have a department focusing on campaigning and moving for policy change to affect the root structural causes of homelessness.



After the orientation we still had a little of time to devote to socializing and getting to know the residents at EHC. For some it was hard, and sometimes opportunities did not present themselves as we might desire, especially given the limited time we had available. But most all had a chance to connect with someone.

"I liked getting to know some of the people at the EHC, like Mark and Ron. And learning about how the whole thing works" said Joan. "Mark told me: get to know the people so you can have a good experience. It's not as simple as it sounds. And Ron treated us like guests and offered us Gum, and I took his picture."

But the experience was not without its minor 'hang-ups.' With people living in such close proximity and such limited privacy some problems are bound to arise. Joan "noticed all of the arguments going on in the women's restroom. They seemed to be more on edge than the guys."

It's clear that, even with all of the great work that the EHC does to uplift the homeless, the reality is, it is a degrading state; one that robs people of their inherent dignity and renders them less than human. The EHC does its best to insure dignity to those it houses, but this is most certainly still efforts at 'damage control.'

Yet, amongst the poverty treasures can be found. As Cristina shares, "I saw strength in the homeless. Our spirituality should be as strong as a people who don't have as much as us."

By eleven we were off to sleep; sleeping on the mats that they lay out on the floor when they run out of beds. And an eventful and formative day comes to a close.

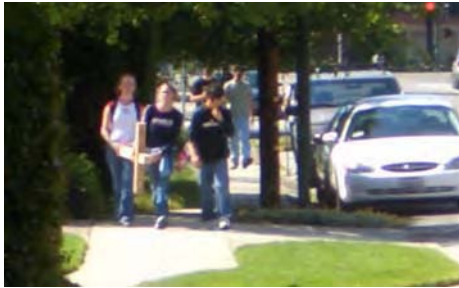
Day 3 – May 1st, 2005

Loneliness to Communion

Perrin Brady

5/7/05

The lights turned on in the big EHC hall and our eyes were open at 6am. We all filed into the dining hall for breakfast. For some this became another opportunity to get to know people at the EHC.



After breakfast we packed the support vehicles and made an early start toward our service of the day. The morning was crisp and calming as we

walked through the sleepy neighborhoods of San Jose. Our spirits were lifted up with the beauty and peace of the morning. The air was cool and the young morning sun filtered through the trees and illuminated the quiet streets. As we reflected in the Day 2 reflection, things are different when taking them from a pedestrian's perspective. Well, the morning was quite different while walking also. The trees, the birds and the green grass of un-kept lawns all seemed more alive and we were able to take in all of the sensations of the morning with clarity. This is a dramatic change in comparison to usual morning routines which are more often than not characterized by stress and caffeine intake.

The pace and demands of making a living and keeping afloat in this society makes it impossible for families to care for their elderly.

Down the road a way we came across a well maintained park in what was then a quiet neighborhood. Joan noticed the sign for the park. The park was dedicated to Fr. Mateo

Keely, former pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in San Jose. He was very active in the community and brought about a lot of good for the residents of the area and for the needs of his community. Joan had known him well in his life. We thought this was befitting that we should stumble upon this park dedicated to him during our God Walk.

Just a few more blocks down the road and we saw twin steeples peeking over the roofs of the neighborhood houses. We gathered that this must be Sacred Heart Church, though few of us were familiar with the church itself. So we decided to take the opportunity to visit this church.

We peeked in and noticed that it was mostly empty. We approached the altar and after people meandered around the church a bit we gathered on the altar to sing and pray. We sang "Lord I Lift Your Name On High" together, with our voices echoing through this large church, lifting our souls to heaven.

Some women noticed our singing and asked us if we were there to sing for their 9am mass. We regretfully told them we weren't, but they urged us to come back and sing for one of their masses some time, and that they really enjoyed our singing. We told them what we were doing and they had the opportunity to sign our cross promising they would pray for us and we would pray for them. And with this added blessing and encouragement we were off on the road again toward Bellerosa Convalescent Hospital.



The time passed quickly as we approached Bellerosa, and the whole of San Carlos Avenue seemed very quiet in comparison to the usual hustle and bustle of the busy street. Within a few hours we reached Bellerosa.

In the entry way of Bellerosa we had a chance to reflect on the reality of Convalescent Hospitals. This is a reality that is a product of the fast pace of our modern society that does not afford such unproductive individuals to live in dignity during their last years on earth. This robs them of much of their dignity and forces them to live in loneliness and extreme isolation during their most vulnerable moments of life. This is a time that they should be receiving the care of their family and loved ones as an edict of dignity. But the pace and demands of making a living and keeping afloat in this society makes it



impossible for families to care for their elderly. In many cases the medical attentions would not be there, but in many others it seems to be too much of a

burden to care for such 'high maintenance' people.

“I was able to see the face of God in the lonely. Because they were suffering; Because God suffered.”

We cannot help but think that if our society were not so consumed with production, competition and superiority we might have the time to provide the care needed for the elderly, and give them the dignity they

deserve. This dignity they deserve not because they have all been exceptional people and brilliant contributors to the common good in their lives, but rather, they deserve it simply because they are human, and vulnerable; they have had a long, hard journey. A compassionless society leaves them to live in obscurity as they face the challenging and debilitating realities of their mortality, largely without companionship and aid. They are left alone in the scariest moments of their lives. This is unjust.

But there are many Pharaohs and many pyramids to be built, and the whip continues to send its resounding cracks throughout our workplace, throughout our educational institutions, throughout our home life and sacred days, and throughout our world. And many are faced with the hard decisions of 'a lesser of two evils.' Would that these hard decisions need not be made?

After our reflection on this reality we moved our attention to preparing the service at hand. We went over one more time our plans. When all was ready we entered the room where the residents were waiting for us, and we introduced ourselves, and told them a little bit about our mission.



Then we proceeded to open up our entertainment session with a few songs of praise and joy. As we sang for them another rendition of “Lord I Lift Your Name On High” (which seemed to become the theme song of the experience), many of the residents began clapping and participating in the fun and praise. This was very encouraging for our group, as there is often an uneasy anxiety with groups working with the elderly. Often times we don't know what to do, and what is appropriate. The resident's willing participation helped us



become comfortable in their house.

Michelle, who had visited Bellerosa before in the past, said, “Bellerose seemed

different, being there for a more lay back purpose.” And surely we were well received by many of the residents there.

After some songs we proceeded to our famous “makin' eggs skit.” After performing more skits and a few more songs we proceeded to make tissue paper May Day flowers for the residents as they began to eat their lunch. Some of us had the enriching opportunity to converse with some of the more cognitive residents sharing stories, jokes and experience.

This was an eye opening experience for many of our participants. Liam said, “I was able to see the face of God in the lonely. Because they were suffering; Because God suffered.”

After distributing our hand crafted flowers to the residents on their lunch trays we said our goodbyes and were on our way to our final destination.

Just a few blocks away we reached St. Martin of Tours. There we deposited some of our pilgrim equipment and piled in the cars to go to lunch and reflection at Valley Fair Mall. We chose this location because of its stark contrast to everything we had experienced during the weekend therefore adding to our reflection. On the balcony outside the food court we discussed our experiences and what we learned over lunch. We then returned to St. Martin's to prepare for our closing Mass.

We were blessed to have Fr. Jon Pedigo as our celebrant for the Mass. Fr. Jon is the Chaplain for Youth and Young Adult Ministry at the Diocese and is the Pastor at St. Julie Biliart in South San Jose. As some of the parents and siblings of the participants arrived we prepared for the liturgy.

The mass was an intimate celebration and amazing culmination of our experience over the past weekend. We sang with sincerity the praises of God who had spoken to our hearts throughout the journey and revealed God's face to us in various and unexpected ways. Through our experiences of service and solidarity our hearts were open evermore to the grace of Christ.

GOD WALK QUOTES & REFLECTIONS:



During the homily part of the mass after the gospel reading, Fr. Jon opened this section up to become a time of dialogue and

reflection on our experience as it related to the Gospel and to the other readings. The first reading was from the book of the Acts of the Apostles, recounting the Apostle's ministry in Samaria and how they had cast out many demons in that area.

Fr. Jon related this to our experience and asked us to name some of the demons we had come encounter with, and how our ministry had helped expel such demons. Many spoke of such things as the demon of loneliness, poverty, separation, social injustice, doubt, and more. This was a great and deep cap to the experience and really related the significance of our mission to the life of the church and the present celebration.

We then celebrated the liturgy of the Eucharist. For this our small group gathered in a circle around the Alter and participated in this intimate meal of the Lord. The Spirit of Christ was surely present in our celebration.

It was as if we ourselves were the disciples walking with the Risen Jesus unknowingly on the road to Emmaus and, having reached our destination, invited Jesus in to break bread with us. We could truly to our core "recognize him in the breaking of the bread."

This celebration truly capped our journey, but it did not bring it to a close as is told in the scriptures: after the disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread (and he vanished from their sight) they ran back the way they had come (from the place they were fleeing with fear) to tell the other Disciples that they had seen the Lord!

This was not the end of our journey; it is the beginning of our greater mission to proclaim the Gospel to all creation.

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For more information about God Walk Ministries visit:
www.godwalk.net

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"It's better to experience what you're preaching about then to just preach it."

-Ken
St. Thomas Aquinas

"We become so enthroned in our lives and how busy they are that we forget how fortunate we are compared to other people."

-Cristina
St. Lawrence the Martyr

"Our walking symbolizes one of Jesus' journeys"

-Travis
St. Lucy's &
St. Martin of Tours

"I liked getting to know some of the people at the EHC, like Mark and Ron. And learning about how the whole thing works. I was surprised at how clean it was."

-Joan
St. Frances Cabrini



"When we went to the homeless shelter - I had never been to a place like that - I didn't expect it to be as nice as it was. Usually you underestimate the quality of the place."

-Adam
St. Joseph of Cupertino

"I learned that there are a lot of people who are working on behalf of the homeless, like at the Emergency Housing Consortium, and who care a lot about them. And that the homeless are a caring community who look out for each other and treat each other with respect, in general."

-Caryn Brady
St. Joseph of Cupertino &
St. Martin of Tours
Main Coordinator
God Walk San Jose

"San Jose was different because you take it at a pedestrian's point of view."

-Fiona
St. Joseph of Cupertino

"The kid's were really creative. The kid's are always creative, I love it."

-Michelle
St. Joseph of Cupertino

“The God Walk San Jose for me was a very Pascal experience. Beginning with the Passover feast and ending in our culminating mass, I was given renewed devotion to the Eucharistic celebration in its challenging socio-religious significance and its deep mystical reality. Our God is a God of Liberation and Solidarity, and Christ is the Lamb that brings us to liberation *now* and forever!”

-Perrin Brady
St. Maria Goretti
Director of
God Walk Ministries

“I was able to see the face of God in the lonely.”

“Because they were suffering”

“Because God suffered”

-Liam
St. Joseph of Cupertino &
St. Martin of Tours

“We have to treat everyone equally weather their young, old or poor.”

-Cristina

“You can change someone’s life just by saying hello to them. Like maybe just a simple hello changes someone’s life.”

-Travis

“Always remember the SUN BLOCK.”

-Ken

“Excesses we have we should give to those who need it”

-Michelle

“Show you are Christian through your actions, not just standing around and talking about it. Because that’s what Jesus did.”

-Michelle

“I saw strength in the homeless. Our spirituality should be as strong as a people who don’t have as much as us.”

-Cristina

“You can make a difference if you try”

-Adam

“I also felt a certain kinship with the homeless reminding me of the times in my life when I have experienced homelessness and uncertain financial situations. It also brought back my love of Franciscan spirituality.”

-Caryn Brady

“You have to go out there and do it. You can’t just sit on the couch and play video games all day, you have to go do it, you have to go change the world.”

-Ken

I loved the God Walk and the whole idea of it but my favorite part of the God Walk had to be the overnight in the Emergency Housing Consortium Shelter. It was an awesome experience for all and it was an eye opener too. It is an experience that I will never forget. I had a woman come up to me and ask if I was new at the shelter and I told her that I was here with a group and she said "I just wanted to welcome you if you were new". That touched my heart and showed me even in the hard times the people there were still filled with compassion for others. I enjoyed talking to all the different people at the shelter and hearing their stories. All in all the God Walk was a fantastic experience that I will always treasure and remember!

-Nancy Pontier
St. Lucy’s

GOD WALK SAN JOSE PHOTOS



Friday Night Sader Supper, St. Martins Hall Kitchen
(left to right) Perrin, Liam, Ken, Adam, Miriam, Michelle, Joan



Luther Burbank Cinco De Mayo/Literacy Festival
Claudia from St. Julie's (right) reading to a student. Free children's books being distributed on right provided by Luther Burbank School



Saturday Opening Prayer at St. Martin of Tours, San Jose
(left to right) Perrin, Caryn (behind Joan), Joan, Fr. Jack



Alex Vo doing his comical dance routine for the children and families at Luther Burbank School



Pilgrims blessing and receiving of the Pilgrim's Cross
(left to right) Michelle, Travis, Michael, Liam, Caryn (behind cross), Fr. Jack



Live Mariachi provided by Luther Burbank School!



Students from Luther Burbank School signing our Pilgrims Cross



Group and Staff at the Emergency Housing Consortium, off of Little Orchard Road, San Jose



Michael carrying the cross down San Carlos, San Jose
(left to right) Michael, Miriam, Travis, Liam (fore ground)



A blurred picture of Caryn and Ron (resident) At the Emergency Housing Consortium



Arriving at St. Joseph's Cathedral Basilica, the oldest Non-Mission Parish in California



Crazy sights in the morning on the way to Bellerosa



Singing Praise at Bellerosa Convalescent Hospital
(left to right) (resident), Ken, Travis, Michelle, Fiona, Liam, Perrin, (residents)



Closing Sunday Mass at St. Martin of Tours
(left to right) Fr. John Pedigo, Perrin, Travis, Liam, Ken, (others)



'Making Eggs' Skit at Bellerosa
(left to right) Standing: Michelle, Liam. On Flore: Fiona, Ken, Travis



Mission accomplished! ... Or just begun!
Some of the group at St. Martin's after the closing Mass

See the God Walk web page:
www.godwalk.net
for full online photo gallery &
for *revised versions of this document*
(with more photos, etc.)