



# St. Patrick's Youth News

Edited by: Pam Hatley

Special Pilgrimage Edition, 2011



“He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” *Mark 6:31*

*Editor’s Note: On Friday morning, June 17<sup>th</sup>, seven Pilgrims and their chaperones set out for Whidbey Island in Washington State. Our Pilgrimage focuses were “Spiritual Enlightenment”, and “Meeting God in Nature”. The pilgrims wrote about their journey several times throughout the week. This article is a collection of their thoughts. Comments in italics were added by me for clarity.*

Katlyn:

As we started our Pilgrimage I strongly believe that no one knew what to expect. I knew that I was wondering what this week had to in store for us and whether or not I brought warm enough clothes. I tried to figure out what life would be like

living in a small compact house with seven teenagers and only two adults. To be honest, I was a bit terrified because I knew how cranky we all got when we were tired. But I soon realized how awesome this spiritual journey was going to be...

Hayley:

Going on Pilgrimage I wasn’t sure what to expect. I knew I would have fun, see some new things, and perhaps get a little closer to God if I was lucky. But, my experiences here have been much more than that. On



Friday after such a long day of travel, I was overwhelmed with relief when the Ferry docked us here on the island. And by Saturday, it was clear to me that Whidbey Island was the quaintest and most ideal place for this rowdy group of seven teenagers to separate themselves from their egotistical ways and truly come together to find, not only God, but a part of ourselves as well, in nature. (On Sunday, we

returned to Seattle to attend a service at a Buddhist Monastery, Eucharist at the Church of the Apostles, and a sung Compline service at St. Mark’s Cathedral.) From the Buddhist Monastery, to the completely unorthodox Episcopal service, and finally to the evening Compline at the cathedral, spirituality was taking on a whole new meaning. I watched life amaze and astound me in new ways. Seeing families just like my own enter the Monastery and practice Buddhism the same way





that I practice Christianity made me realize that faith and spirituality are different for every person. And then, as we sipped iced tea and sang to live music beside some of the friendliest people (*at the Church of the Apostles, a non-traditional Episcopal Church in Seattle*), I realized that not only is religion different, but we practice things differently as well. While some churches like tradition, others prefer to go their own way, and I came to understand that either way is okay. Finally, on Sunday night, we entered St. Mark's Cathedral, seeing countless people sprawled across the altar and even laying on blankets with pillows, and heard the choir begin to sing, it occurred to me that all of these people, regardless of their religious beliefs or orientation were here to listen. Needless to say, I was mesmerized and astounded by their power.

*On Monday, we visited the Earth Sanctuary, a special place created for mediation and spiritual enlightenment.*

Ryan:

In my experience of the first few days of the pilgrimage, I was spiritually transcended by nature. The beauty of the people I met at the Buddhist Monastery and at the Episcopal Church made me glad in the very fiber of my soul. The Earth Sanctuary man had the strongest spiritual effect on me of this trip, and possibly my life. I performed the ritual of the Native American Medicine Wheel, and I felt the spiritual power and healing of the wheel. I felt all troubles leave my soul and I felt clarity and happiness. After I performed this ritual, I began to see the true beauty of nature through the eyes of grandmother earth, and I was nearly brought to tears by the beauty of the Earth Sanctuary. I am now open and clear.



Hunter:

So far on my Pilgrimage, it has been a very beautiful experience, and so far my favorite thing we have done is tour the Earth Sanctuary because it is just filled with nature and it is so peaceful and there is nothing you have to worry about, you can just let go. That's what I think is true meditation. I did not think I would like it, but I love it. The medicine wheel is so touching because after you do it, you really see the beauty of nature and how special it is. This is just absolutely amazing. If I could take another trip here, I would, because this has brought me closer to God and it is just amazing. What shocked me was when Ryan and I were at the Medicine Wheel, we saw two bald eagles flying in circles around us and over the medicine



wheel. It just felt like God was sending us a message.

Noah:

My Pilgrimage has been indescribable. For the first time in my memory, I am not stressed. This in itself is amazing. I feel that this will allow me to get closer to God and my group.

Alex:

At the Earth Sanctuary, you can meditate beside the rocks that had once been crystallized by a volcano, meditate with the spirits of a once baby whale, you can meditate with God. You do not have to worry about the outside world, or where you are going to go eat when you get home. You strictly spend alone time with God and nature. When you close your eyes, and really listen, you hear the beautiful life that God has created. You can hear the echo of the sparrows' call reflecting off the walls of the upright rocks. You can hear the wind roll through the prayer flags, taking the many prayers, and releasing them out onto the earth.



Gabby:

Whidbey Island is just amazing. As I write this, I am lying on a gigantic boulder in the Earth Sanctuary, listening to the sounds of nature, and I cannot tell you how at peace I am. To sum up the Earth Sanctuary, it's a vast space of exotic vegetation, breath-taking scenery, magnificent trails, and indescribable feeling of peace and comfort. While we were here, our tour guide, Chuck, told us about the Sanctuary and led us in some much needed meditation which I think did wonders for us all.



*On Tuesday and Wednesday, we crewed a 52 foot Sail Boat to a small island, camped for the night, and sailed back to Whidbey the next day.*

Hayley:

I am not an outdoorsy person at all. However, if there's anything I can take away from sailing and camping, it was the beauty I discovered in God's nature. When the boat set sail, I had, for the most part, adjusted to my duties aboard the Cutty Sark, I noticed the pristine day our group had been blessed with. As we sailed, the boat appeared to be sliding through the oceans' glossy waters as the sun's beams stretched out to warmly enfold us.

Gabby:

At around 10am on Tuesday, we met up with Natavar to get camera gear we rented. After that we went to meet up with Captain John on the docks. And his gorgeous 52 foot sailboat and shoved off. We didn't do too much sailing on the way there because there wasn't much wind, but it was a beautiful sunny day. On the ship, we each had different jobs; bow (front of boat) look out, port (left)



lookout, starboard (right) lookout, stern (back of the boat) lookout, helm (driver), pilot house (recorded things in the log book), and boat check (ring the bell for time and haul in the bumpers). When we got to the island, we set up camp and went out to explore. The island was beautiful.



Alex:

Well, so far our trip has been wonderful. The last two days, we went sailing with Captain John. He has a 52 foot sailboat, one of only 11 other boats of the same kind. They are also quite beautiful, I might add. When we reached Deception Pass Marina, and met Captain John, I didn't really know what to think of him. He seemed a little stern. He ended up being a cool dude. While on the boat, we were the crew. I loved that I got to steer the

vessel up under Deception Pass. Captain John said that I did amazing and he was very proud of me. It was a little tricky at times. First, trying to figure out how to maneuver the boat, but after a while, I became a natural. On our way, we saw seals on a small island. They were just lounging and sunning away. When we reached our campsite for the night, I realized that it was a deserted island. It was so pretty, though.

Katlyn:

Sailing was lovely because the boat was quite nice and Captain John was a wonderful captain who taught us how to sail in a not so professional, professional manner. My favorite job while on the sailboat was being on the bow because I was able to see everything for miles.





Ryan:

In my experience of the sailing and camping trip, I learned much and became grounded in my spirit again. I learned many things from the multiple stations on a sailboat to learning how to take a photo with a professional style camera. Before we departed the island, I went hiking with Brad and throughout this hike around the island, he educated me on how to use a professional camera, using the aperture, focus and the speed. This hiking and photography project turned into a wonderful experience that truly made me happy.

Noah:

Camping was such a great experience. On the boat, we all had our jobs, and on the island, we all talked about the good things about each other. This was the best part, in my opinion.

I had a ton of fun in the last two days.

*In the airport on the way home, I asked the Pilgrims to write about what they had learned or how they had been changed by the trip.*



Katlyn:

During this Pilgrimage, I learned that tolerance is a key part of life. This was an important lesson because I am not a naturally tolerant person of people doing or saying things that I find not so intelligent. I do not think that I will ever be a naturally tolerant person, but through this Pilgrimage, I have learned to tolerate people that are different from me. I have also learned that the road to a happy life is to have a great spiritual relationship with God and to have wonderful and loving friends that stand by you no matter what you are going through. This experience has taught me many things about my life and myself. I

have learned about being a team with those around me. I also know that it is important to care about those around me.

Hunter:

The way my Pilgrimage changed me was that it taught me to not be so attached to things and how to let things go. To me this was a good thing to learn because it takes more muscles and strength to hold something in and to stress over things. Now that I have learned this, it will help me be happier and be a better person. This is an important thing to everyone because people in America are stressed out all of the time which is not good for the body. So I think people should make a Pilgrimage like this one, not just one time but as much as they can.



Gabby:

The Earth Sanctuary was probably the most peaceful place, and the place where I felt closest to God all trip. I definitely recommend that people of any age take a Pilgrimage. I think it helped renew my faith in God, and finding and being closer to God makes me feel better about myself.

Hayley:

When you're young, you often have trouble finding out who you are in this world. Heck, I'm pretty sure most people spend a lot of their lives discovering themselves. At 17, I probably spend too much of my time desperately attempting to figure out where I fit in too. But, something about Pilgrimage helped me find a small part of myself. Even if it took flying 3,000 miles away, to a place I've never been, with kids I had to learn to live with. Did I mention I left my cell phone at home? Yeah, a teenager who dropped all contact with Mooresville just to search for a part of herself. On the surface, it seems a little extreme... but I needed it, because in finding pieces of myself, I found a little of my faith too. And, as exhausting and trying as the past week has been, I wouldn't trade my experiences on Whidbey Island or in Seattle for anything in the world.





