

# Postcard



## School of the Pilgrim

### 2009 Pilgrimage to El Santuario de Chimayo

On Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2009, I landed in Albuquerque, NM after a long day of worship and picnics at First Presbyterian Church of Henderson, NC. Meeting me at the airport was Fr. Ed, priest-in-charge for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe annual pilgrimage of vocations to Chimayo, NM. Chimayo is a holy site and place of healing, in which many pilgrims have come throughout two centuries. For the last 37 years, modern day pilgrims have come to this holy site, walking over 100 miles in 5 1/2 days, asking God's guidance in fulfilling one's call or vocation in life. Each year, around two hundred pilgrims have taken the first week in June as a time of pilgrimage, walking from as far as Chamas, Costilla, Albuquerque, Bernal and Estancia, all gathering on that first Sat. of the month,

joyously (with callouses) praising God and singing to the rafters of the 200 year old chapel outside of Santa Fe.

We would like to share with you, dear friends, some of the highlights from each day of this pilgrimage. This pilgrimage is very meaningful to me personally because 10 years ago I went on my very first, actual pilgrimage to Chimayo, and from that pilgrimage, School of the Pilgrim was born:

*June 1st:* I woke up at 3:00 A.M., with 38 other pilgrims packing up their belongings in the Catholic Fellowship Hall of Estancia, NM. We were 120 miles south of Chimayo. After a series of quick introductions, prayers, stretches, and breakfast, by 4:30 A.M. we were on the road to Moriarty, NM. It would be a day of gaining my bearings, learning to walk 17 miles again, with the gift of two blis-

ters arising, one on each heel. The group of pilgrims were wonderful, with the youngest being 13 years old, and the oldest 70 years old.

*June 2nd:* Moriarty to Mile Marker 44: This was the first pilgrimage route that was blazed by the late-Fr. Michael O'Brien. He began this pilgrimage with youth group members who wanted to do something out of the

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# 2009

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The mission of the School of the Pilgrim is to educate individual Christians and churches in our life-long pilgrimage of following and living the pilgrim-life mapped out for us by the Pilgrim God, Jesus Christ. In following Jesus Christ we re-discover the meaningfulness of being called people of "The Way" (Acts 9:2). This mission is accomplished when Christians come to understand that change and growth occur when we begin to see, hear, and sense that our life together, as members of the body of Christ, is a life-long pilgrimage. Whether we are on an actual pilgrimage, or practicing the pilgrimage rituals at home, we grow in our understanding that we are but the most recent participants in a long train of pilgrims who have preceded us in life.

ordinary, and so the idea of the pilgrimage to Chimayo was born.

Each morning, we would get up by 3 or 3:30 with prayers, followed by a quick breakfast in order that we could get a good 17-20 mile walk in by 12 noon or 1:00 before the 80+s degrees and arid heat would get the best of us. Today's gift was lunch with the Chavez family; the father of this happy clan was among the first pilgrims almost 40 years ago.

*June 3: Mile Marker 44 to Mile Marker 61:* This stretch of land was flat for the first few days, and today we were starting to see and feel the roll of hillsides. We could see the mountain range, Sangre de Cristo, in the distance, leading us to Santa Fe. On the right and left were tumbleweeds, a wild hare darting out here and there, with the shuffle of pilgrims' feet. The highlight of today was greeting the parishioners of the Church in Galisteo, NM, a lovely parish. The people treated us as beloved saints, hosting us for a lovely meal in the middle of a hot morning. God's presence become more apparent throughout the day.



*June 4: Mile Marker 61 to Santa Fe:* The highlight of the day was making it to the Cathedral/Basilica of Santa Fe! This beautiful building and people welcomed us with open arms and a great lunch. What is becoming quite apparent is how odd it is to see a line of 39 men walking with a large cross (guia), an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a puzzle piece, bags of soil and prayers, followed by a group of pilgrims praying the rosary in this day and age. In the city of Santa Fe our uniqueness stood out for all the tourists to see and hear.

*June 5: Santa Fe to Pojaque:* On the last night of the pilgrimage, there is a ritual that all the pilgrimage groups practice in welcoming the novices to the art and sacred ritual of pilgrimage: with a quilt made of old t-shirts from previous pilgrimages, the cross (guia) standing at one end of the quilt, surrounded by large votive candles, the veteran pilgrims tell the young pilgrims what is meaningful and what they are thankful for in the pilgrimage of vocation. Then the young pilgrims tell of their experiences in being on pilgrimage. And behold: lives are touched! Lives are changed! Pilgrimage is transformation!

*June 6th: Chimayo!* There is a bitterness to this day, in which all the bands of pilgrims come in, one by one, into the old

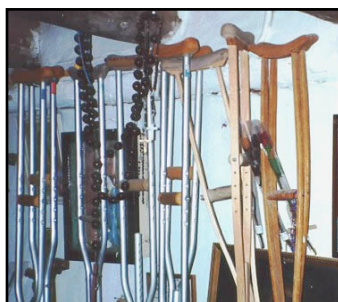
adobe structure. We were the second group coming in that day, with a group of women singing loudly as we entered, celebrating our arrival. We did the same for the next two groups. During the Mass, we celebrated the lives of those who were touched along the way by sharing our stories, poring the soil from all the various places we had stopped, and giving all the prayer requests gathered to the Archbishop. The Mass was purely celebratory.

And with that, the pilgrimage of 2009 was over, but the stories, sounds, and images of the pilgrimage linger on to this very day.

*On pilgrimage, not only  
do we leave our mark  
upon the land and the  
people around us, but the  
land and the people  
leave their mark upon us  
as well.*

### Pilgrimage in the Holy Land in 2009

In 2009, the School of the Pilgrim is working with Dr. Henry Carse in sponsoring a Pilgrimage of Peace in the Holy Land November 15-22, 2009. We will begin with conversations with Palestinians and Israelis concerning the current state of affairs in the Holy Land. This will be followed by a 10 day pilgrimage in the Sinai peninsula by jeep, foot, and camel. If you are interested in coming on this incredible pilgrimage, contact me at [Brett@schoolofthepilgrim.com](mailto:Brett@schoolofthepilgrim.com), or call me at 919-444-9111. Airfare is currently around \$1000 from the East Coast to Tel Aviv, and the cost while in the Holy Land is estimated to be \$1,500 for food, lodging, and transportation. Come and join us on this meaningful pilgrimage!



### Fundraising Activities

It is that time of year when, like all good non-profits, the School of the Pilgrim will be asking you, our friends, family members, and associates, to continue to support the School of the Pilgrim. We raised over \$5,000 during our summer fund-raising, broadening our pledge base, with many thanks to those of you who gave to the School, as well as for those who continue to keep us in your prayers. In 2009, along with the pilgrimage to Chimayo and the Holy Land, our hope is to continue to maintain the expenses for the office and program assistant, while also planning pilgrimages for 2010. Your continued support with prayers, talents, and financial gifts are, as always, appreciated and welcomed. We are humbled and honored by your support of our work, both here and abroad.

[www.schoolofthepilgrim.com](http://www.schoolofthepilgrim.com)  
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### Two Year Anniversary of the School of the Pilgrim

In August 2007, the School of the Pilgrim became a 501(c)3 organization. In 2008, the School became a validated ministry of the New Hope Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Plans are afoot in broadening the outreach of the School of the Pilgrim in 2010. Our hope is to work with more conference and retreat centers, along with a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and Iona, Scotland, with specific groups of people. Stay tuned for more information! in the coming newsletters.