



## **The Camino of Saint James: A path of life!**

“Casa di Maria” formation house this summer, asked me to have an experience of the Camino. This experience comprised of; a pilgrimage and a retreat, to prepare me for the renewal of my vows on 12 September 2020. The initial idea was to do the Camino for over 2 weeks. As the situation evolved, Daniel proposed an itinerary of eight days for me. In drawing the plan, he considered the places where the hostels were open and where I could meet the colleagues in those areas. My daily program during the Camino was quite simple. In the morning, I had lauds, a meditation on the word of God, meditation on the mysteries of the rosary, spiritual readings and then silence and solitude. In the afternoon, it was either resting, cooking, or eating out while discussing with other pilgrims about their experiences of the journey. Before sleeping, I do an examination of consciousness for the day and then compline.

### **What was your experience as a pilgrim on the Camino?**

The Camino was not just a simple path. For me, it was a path of life. When I started the Camino, the most important thing was to nourish myself spiritually and to reach my drop point for the day. In one of my spiritual readings, I realized that silence helps me to grow more in maturity. Silence also prevents me from projecting my shortcomings on others. Also, thanks to the silence, I can better live out my vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity by internalizing them. Furthermore, silence allows us to be in intimate union with God, to truly taste God. To follow Christ is to know how to listen to one’s heart in silence. To put oneself in communion with God and to listen to the little voice that speaks to us. God will never come before you to tell you what to do but will use people and signs to make you understand what He expects of you. Yes, we are pilgrims on this earth, it is important to be enduring and let God’s will be accomplished in us and not the other way round. Although on our pilgrim way, we all have different paths, we have a common destination and that is God. It is the path of life. It is the path we all seek.

### **You started in Fromista: What was the hardest and easiest stage?**

My Camino started on Friday, August 28 in Fromistà. Daniel made sure to drop me there and just showed me the direction to go. For once, I did not follow the GPS, but let myself be guided by the yellow arrows and the Spirit. It is important to emphasize that my Camino was both a pilgrimage and a retreat. However, if there is one stage of the Camino that was easy, perhaps I would say it was the first day. I had all the strength necessary to start the walk and just concentrate on my spiritual exercises for the day. But as I walked towards Astorga, I started to feel the weight of the journey. Walking the Camino allowed me to realize that it is in trial and endurance that I can taste God. Thursday was a difficult day for me. It was the stage between Leon and San Martin del Camino. Here, I almost gave up everything because I had a terrible sore foot. I could not go any further, I was stuck. So, what do I do? Continue or call for someone to pick me up? I sat down without panicking; I began to pray. Then I took off my shoes, put on my sandals, and put on my massage products. And like a miracle, I got

up and started walking again to where I was supposed to spend the night. I see there, the hand of God that was on me. And now I was able to continue my walk to finish the pilgrimage to Astorga without further incident.

### **How was the relationship with the other pilgrims?**

My relationship with the other pilgrims was quite easy to get in contact. Because I was going to them and besides, I was a pilgrim that everyone wanted to know more about. I was their curiosity! They all wanted to know what I do for a living and why I was walking. The point was that the majority were young people. This meant that we could easily discuss subjects that are common to us such as; the countryside, travel, culture, the political situations, the lives of young people, the decisions to be made, etc. I would say that our discussions were rich. I made some friends along the way and look forward to seeing each other again when the weather permits. It is important to make these different connections that bring us together and that allows us to know others and to be open to them.

### **Do you think you will end up one day and arrive in Santiago?**

To this question, I would say it could be possible because my dream as a pilgrim of God, would be to arrive in Santiago again to walk until the 'End of the road'. It is a spiritual moment that is not so easily forgotten. So, if I have the opportunity again to take the Camino, it will be with great joy that I will head back to Santiago.

### **On September 12, you renewed your religious vows: What attracts you the most about the Society of Mary?**

While doing the Camino, I had time to reflect more on the evangelical counsels as I already mentioned. Renewing my vows in the Society of Mary shows the confidence that the Society of Mary has for us who want to follow Jesus. As Sons of predilection of the Blessed Virgin Mary today, just like her, I must know how to set out when the need arises. So, if it is necessary to speak about what attracts me in the Society of Mary, perhaps I would say it is first of all the Charism and Spirituality which in summary is "being an instrument of Divine Mercy in the field of formal and informal education and also to do works of mercy." I would also underline the dimension of the international formation which helps me to have "One mind, one spirit". This is a way to get to know each other more and prepare ourselves to work as a team in the future missions of the Society of Mary. On my Camino, I spent a night in our community in Leon. It was a moment of joy to see the brothers, who gave me so much confidence and made me feel the fraternal love that we have among us Marists. Because indeed, we form a universal family as John Larsen says in his monthly reflection (Reflections of the Superior Genera) of September 2020.

*The Pilgrim of God*

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