

## Blah Sheffield - Pilgrimage - Mark Berry - July 17<sup>th</sup> 2007

1) Questions on screen

2) Intro

a) History

- Pre-Christian - hills, wells and circles - thin places (connection with the environment, safety, provision)

*thin places are ports in the storm of life, where the pilgrims can move closer to the god they seek, where one leaves that which is familiar and journeys into the divine presence. they are stopping places where men and women are given pause to wonder about what lies beyond the mundane rituals, the grief, trials and boredom of our day-to-day life. they probe to the core of the human heart and open the pathway that leads to satisfying the familiar hungers and yearnings common to all people on earth, the hunger to be connected, to be a part of something greater, to be loved, to find peace. - mindie burgoyne*

- Perigrini

*The peregrinatio... was always a journey to the 'other world'. There was sometimes a mystical as well as a mythical quality to the language for what the saints sought was no less than the land of heaven itself. The perfect pilgrimage involved an inner as well as an outer change. By leaving the religious settlement and home country, the ascetic also left his or her 'place in the world', that is status. Beyond the normal boundaries of religious and social life there was no recognised position and therefore no protection. To be an exile was effectively to be outside social structures and independent of ecclesiastical ones. - Philip Sheldrake*

*what made these early irish pilgrims different from later medieval ones was the fact that they did not have a predetermined destination and that they were prepared, having set out, never to see their homeland again. they simply trusted god to show them the way. - james harpur*

- shrines and saints

Canterbury, Walsingham, St. Albans, Lichfield, Durham, St Davids etc.  
places of healing

- Labyrinths

Pre-Christian Labyrinths, Chartres etc. Cletic symbols of the walk of life (we don't know a lot!)

b) Today

- Spirituality as journey - move away from institutional and mechanistic understandings of spirituality
- Space in busyness - stress and pressure (The monastery)
- Ancient-future connection (reclaiming of roots)

the wisdom of past ages without a vision of the future is irrelevant, but a vision of the future ignorant of the lessons of the past is irresponsible - cota

So we are seeing a revival of pilgrimage, in some cases a kind of spiritual tourism, some as regular pools of rest (Taize) some as a rite of passage (Santiago de compostela) along with a growing desire to reflect the rhythms of the environment etc.

### c. Missional living

- exiles and ex-hodus (out-way)

*Journeying out requires the capacity to rise above the anxiety associated with encountering and embracing a potentially overwhelming, outside world. - Ann Morissy*

- incarnational god (leaving to love)

*We are used to seeing some respond with despair and grief, and others with assimilation to the dominant values. What is much more disturbing to us is the example of a god who does neither, but instead answers with a fresh, imaginative theological response. Jesus neither slides into compromise and sinfulness, nor fulfils our expectations of the holier-than-thou guru. there is no more dangerous path than the one trodden by Jesus.*

**Michael Frost**

*the related ideas of liminality and communitas describe the dynamics of the Christian community inspired to overcome their instincts to "huddle and cuddle" and to instead form themselves around a common mission that calls them on a dangerous journey to unknown places - a mission that calls the church to shake off its collective securities and to plunge into the world of action, where its members will experience disorientation and marginalization but also where they encounter God and each other in a new way. - Alan Hirsch*

*Experience of being alongside the poor and discounted, at a minimum, scrambles stereotypes, and, at its best, enables the church to understand what it is that Jesus was going on about. And this gives hope that the genuine practicality, as well as the reality, of the upside-down values and processes that Jesus commended will enter the Church's bloodstream. A structure of participation provides opportunities for people to take part in a wider struggle and the*

*encounters that result can set up a transformational dynamic. - Ann Morisy*

- holistic spirituality

Non-compartmentalised spirituality - all life, all journeys, all creation as pilgrimage...

*we infinitely wrong ourselves by laziness and confinement. all creatures in all nations, and tongues, and people praise god infinitely; and more, for being your sole and perfect treasures. you are never what you ought until you go out of yourself and walk among them. - thomas traherne*

to observe the complexities and subtleties of the natural order is to be aware of the abundantly creative nature of god... and all of this calls beyond itself, speaking in a language, which our souls comprehend, of the one whose fiery imagination has sung all this into being. **Mike Ridell**

d. seven stages of pilgrimage (after

- 1 - What does it mean to be a pilgrim?  
(a question of identity)
- 2 - What are the signs that lead me on the journey?  
(the journey has twists and turns, is non-linear)
- 3 - Who are my companions, do i really know them?  
(community journey - intimacy and vulnerability)
- 4 - What is the story of the people and places?  
(social, spiritual, political, historical)
- 5 - Become part of the story  
(not simply an observer - connected to the story)
- 6 - Become aware of where heaven and earth touch  
(thin places and times - God in the ordinary)
- 7 - Become aware that we are all the people of God  
(connected to all people and things in and of God)

Fish video - a choice between stagnant/infantile equilibrium or dangerous adaptation and growth beyond the boundaries - pilgrimage = the dangerous journey.