

The Jesuit Pilgrimage

“Prayer became a good friend and kept me occupied quite frequently.”



by Matthew Lieser, nSJ

Following the example of St. Ignatius Loyola, Jesuits are trained to depend on God and to let the Holy Spirit order their steps. Since the beginning of the Society of Jesus, new novices have undertaken a pilgrimage “experiment” in which they travel to various destinations with next to nothing and learn how to be sustained by the graces they receive along the way.

These two passages are excerpted from the pilgrimage journals of first-year novices Matthew Lieser, nSJ, and Joshua Peters, nSJ—who traveled for one month with only \$35 and a one-way bus ticket.

The severity of my pilgrimage set in as I disembarked the Greyhound bus in Spokane after a two-day trek from Detroit. Dumped into an unfamiliar city, I was hungry and tired. Prayer became a good friend and kept me occupied quite frequently. I prayed my way to the tourist information center and humbled myself to ask for a list of homeless shelters in the area. I noticed a slight shade of red come over my face throughout our conversation. I found the Union Christian Gospel Mission located right next to the pristine Gonzaga University of the Jesuits. Upon entering I felt the strong gaze of two student volunteers. I did not look the part of a homeless man yet and they were obviously curious about me. After they breathalyzed me, I was given the rules and led into the recreational area. There were about 60 men. We were all required to perform one chore



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and spend one hour in chapel each night. I figured I could handle this, despite my obvious discomfort, until I was handed a bundle of pajamas and told to get in line for my group shower. This was my greatest moment of desolation, as I pondered the idea of running to the door and knocking at the Jesuit residence at Gonzaga. But before I could act on this impulse, I felt a sudden peace come over me. “Christ is here with these men,” I thought. “I can’t leave. This is part of his perfect will to transform me and allow me to be a part of this moment.” Christ really sustained me those first few days at the Gospel Mission. Writing in my journal that evening I saw how special it was not only to stop in and visit with the poor but actually to be living with them in community. This was a first for me, and something that I will never forget.

Upcoming Events

Men who are interested

in a Jesuit vocation are invited to attend upcoming events to better acquaint themselves with the Jesuit tradition. To reserve a spot for any of these events, please contact Fr. Patrick Fairbanks, SJ, at vocations@jesuits-chgdet.org or 773-975-6363.

Open House for Candidates

Men who are interested in learning more about becoming a Jesuit are invited to come ask questions and learn about Jesuit life at this informal meeting.

September 11, 2010, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Loyola University Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Vocations Director Visit

October 1–2, 2010

Columbus, Ohio

Come and See Weekends

October 1–3, 2010

The Jesuit Novitiate
St. Paul, Minnesota

October 29–31, 2010

Loyola University Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Candidate Meeting

October 16, 2010, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Chicago, Illinois



Joshua Peters, nSJ, (right) enjoys a meal at the Comedor.

by Joshua Peters, nSJ

On my first day in Nogales (on the border of Arizona and Mexico), I went to the *Comedor* (soup kitchen) to help serve breakfast. I helped welcome *Migrantes* (Migrants) to the Comedor with a simple handshake, smile, and “Buenos Dias” or “Bienvenidos!” I was amazed at how simple, yet profound, the whole scene was; how a group of 100 hungry migrants can be so attentive when the blessing is being offered before the meal; how migrants will volunteer to wash dishes, pass out food, and help clean; and how a fenced-in slab of concrete can become a warm, hospitable dining room. I was amazed when, upon leaving, the migrants would thank me of all people. Someone told me, “You’re not going to believe this, but you, a white, American man being here and showing them simple respect and dignity has a profound effect. Migrants have been so mistreated and disrespected in the States by men who look just like you.” I was also struck by how hard

everyone worked around the Comedor, which offered people respect and dignity.

It is true that the issue of whether migrants should be allowed to pass into the US or not is complex and difficult to navigate. Politics, prejudice, and pride all play a big role. One thing I’ve felt very strongly here is that, no matter what side of the issue you come down on, in the end migrants are people and need to be treated like people. ■

For more information about the Jesuits, please contact

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