

Camino Contemplations (A Message from Pastor Dave) W4

On my journey through the 'La Rioja' region (see pic), I came across two alternate routes; the Way of St James and the Way of St Ignatius. It got me thinking of the lives of these two men; their influence and impact. I considered the many different 'routes' in life they took and indeed we all take. Then entering a town called 'Ages,' (yes that's right!) I saw a sign, the witty inhabitants, had placed on the Camino path for travellers to be welcomed with (see pic). They try to suggest that all paths eventually lead to Ages.

Some believe that all paths eventually lead to the 'Rock of Ages,' (hymn and scriptures) the 'Ancient of Days' (Dan. 7: 22). Jesus though clearly tells us that He alone is the 'way' to the Rock, God, (John 14: 6) and Peter affirms that there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved (Acts 4: 12).

The Christian faith in early Church times was often referred to as 'the Way,' (Acts 19: 23). This is because it described well the 'new life' that was presented through Jesus and the 'way' that life was to be lived.

The Camino, which means 'way' or 'main route,' is a long and hard path. Yes there is beauty, joy, rest and wonder but in truth due to terrain, heat, difficulty and at times confusion of route (sometimes because less scrupulous entrepreneurs paint yellow arrows to get you to their businesses and then abandon you); it is simply hard work. There is temptation to look for easier more pleasant routes, short cuts or to even give up.

Jesus calls us to follow His Way in His footsteps, this means self-denial, discipline and submission to Him (Luke 9: 23); these are attributes we can see in the lives of St James and St Ignatius. This 'Way' is a new life, full of wonder, joy, beauty and purpose. It is also hard and we can find ourselves tempted by other routes, short cuts, giving up or even trying to walk two paths (doing enough to stay our consciences but fitting in with the world too).

As we walk in the Way of Jesus let us consider carefully the route we are taking so that we bring glory to God and bless others as the 'Ways' of St James and Ignatius did. Let our troubled hearts be reassured by Christ's encouragement of our final destination, His walk with us now and His provision as we travel life's journey (John 14: 1-14).

As you read this, God willing, I will have entered the Meseta, Spain's High Plateau desert. On my journey so far I've met many wonderful characters including a young man whose student Visa runs out soon so he's getting the Camino 'in quick.' He walks with a face mask, thin soled gym shoes, a plastic bag and a suit case(!).....and of course an ipad! I also met someone who seems to really like me although he doesn't say much

