



God our Father, be with us on our pilgrim journey of faith. Give us the grace and courage to step forward in faith and hope on the road ahead.

Open our eyes to see your face in all those we encounter. Open our ears to hear your voice in those we will encounter. Open our hearts that we might be faithful disciples of mercy and truth.

Like the disciples who journeyed up the mountain to witness the Transfiguration, may this experience be an encounter that strengthens us for our work in our parish, our diocese, our state, and our world.

Through the intercession of Mary, the Immaculate Conception, patroness of our nation, may we be worthy witnesses of our faith, humble representatives of our parishes and diocese, and inspired missionaries bringing peace, hope, and mercy into our communities.

We ask all this through Christ Our Lord.

Amen.



The NCYC Pilgrimage Experience

A true pilgrimage is about more than preparing to go on a vacation or field trip. For many young people, this will be one of the first non-school and non-family travel experiences. It is important that it not become another group vacation or the youth group equivalent of a band/ choir trip. The excitement will be there, same as the others, but we hope to focus that excitement into an expression of faith.

What Is A Pilgrimage Anyway?

“A pilgrimage differs from a tour in several important ways. It is a personal invitation from God, comprised of His offer and dependent upon the pilgrim’s acceptance. God’s call may vary but the purpose remains consistent: It is an individual summons to know God more fully. A pilgrimage is a spiritual journey to which the pilgrim joyfully responds ‘yes’ to God’s invitation.

“Although in previous centuries many trials were intrinsic to a pilgrimage, the modern pilgrim has an abundance of affordable travel options, yet the purpose remains unchanged. It is a journey to a holy, sacred place to usher the pilgrim into the presence of God.

“The pilgrim must embark on this journey with joyful anticipation, being willing temporarily to separate himself or herself from the world and to offer himself or herself in humble service to another. A successful pilgrimage involves a commitment to leave behind one’s problems and to focus instead on seeking to learn more about our heavenly Father, making one’s heart full of desire for special graces, praises, petitions and thanksgiving, returning home transformed, renewed and restored by the abundant blessings received.”

Goals of A Pilgrimage:

The goals of a pilgrimage, especially for youth, should reflect the general goals for youth ministry found in *Renewing the Vision*. As a reminder, those goals are:

- To draw young people into responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the faith community
- To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today
- To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person

Pilgrimage is an outward expression of an inner journey. Each person is on their own faith journey, and groups/communities often form to support those journeys. When we take a physical journey to highlight the inner process of faith growth, we are on pilgrimage.

An NCYC Pilgrimage is not simply fundraising (which is important) or community building activities (which are important) or gathering forms (which is important) or sending in payments (which is important), but rather includes the practical while embracing the mystical.