

The Ignatian Way – The End of a Journey

Manresa, Spain

Thursday, 30-Aug-18



By Anouska Robinson-Biggin fcJ

From the 19th to 29th July 2018 with Alicia fcJ and Peter Randall SJ I had the joy of leading a group of nine young adults from [Mount Street Jesuit Centre](#) from Lleida to Manresa on the fourth part of [The Ignatian Way](#). Two of the nine had walked with Peter and I from Loyola where the pilgrimage had begun in 2015.

We were blessed with good weather, hot – averaging mid 30s – but so blessed that it was not the week later when it would have been the mid-40s and this is one part that has been consistent through each of the four years, the right conditions and the right people turning up at the right time to help, initially MariJoxe and her friend Lurdes, then Jaime a Spanish Jesuit scholastic arrived in London and helped with the planning of the accommodation and then Alicia returned from Argentina and has been wonderful to work alongside for the last three years.

The walking this year was lower in altitude than the first but with more varied landscapes than the 2nd and 3rd and we had the joy of Montserrat and Manresa to call us forward when the limbs were tired and the pathway long. In total we walked about 112 miles or 180 km over six days and the only blister I got over the whole four years was on the day we spent (not really walking) in Manresa! The climb to Montserrat was brutal and was finished off with big steps and a woodland path that is meant to be easier than the road, but my knees were not so convinced having done the 27 km walk already. However, the beauty of the place was stunning, and I am sure was made more beautiful because of the effort taken to get there.

Our Lady of Montserrat Cloister in Montserrat Candle lit in Montserrat

We were lucky enough to join the Benedictine monks and many visitors for Solemn Vespers on the Vigil of St. James and have Mass in the crypt for our group when we arrived. We spent a repose day in Montserrat after five days of walking and it was so moving to be in a place that had been so significant for Ignatius and have time to stop and pray. We joined the Conventual Mass for the Feast of St. James the day after and some of the group enjoyed going up on the Funicular to visit the top of the mountains.

Having learned after the first year, each day we set off early, between 5am and 6am. We either had breakfast first (if our accommodation could offer it) or carried it on route and stopped along the way. The early starts gave us the chance to cover some miles before the worst heat of the day and that was good for our spirits. Having had one hour of silent reflection at some point each day with reflection questions rooted in Ignatius' story but linked to our own each participant had the chance to deepen their own personal relationship with God. Wherever we arrived we had Mass, a good meal and then finished each day with a reflection

circle where we heard the joys and struggles of the day for each person and how God had been at work in them in that day. This was a particularly rich time for many of the young adults and the group. And it is this work of God that spurred me on. As many of you will know I am not a big fan of walking, but I was very willing to walk this route as I believed and year after year I was rewarded with the opportunity to watch and accompany the young adults as they encountered God on that journey. This was facilitated with the reflection booklet that I made for each pilgrim. Each year watching and seeing God at work before my eyes was a real gift and for that I would walk.

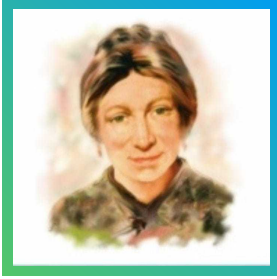
Arriving in Manresa was like a dream. I could not quite believe I had done it. 650 km from Loyola, over four years and we were finally here, celebrating Mass in the Cave that had been so important to Ignatius and his spiritual awakening. We spent two days in Manresa absorbing the spirit of the place as well as reflecting on the whole pilgrimage experience, for some over four years, for most of the last week and I provided questions and readings to help. When we gathered together to share the fruits of the time together it was with real gratitude that I was able once more to rejoice at God alive and active in the lives of the young adults as well as acknowledging the work he was doing in me.

I was overjoyed to have had the chance to lead and complete this pilgrimage and it was made even more special when I asked you for prayer intentions to carry and pray for on the way but particularly in Montserrat and Manresa. I prayed for all the intentions of those who got in touch and for many others who came to mind as I walked along and for our whole Society. It was a real moment of union of mind and heart and I was so blessed to receive your prayer intentions and carry them with me so thank you for entrusting them to me as we walked along.



Group in the cave at Manresa

As I come to the end of my ministry at Mount Street Jesuit Centre (I finish in fact on 2nd September). I am delighted to have had the chance to complete this pilgrimage with the young adults over four amazing years and whilst the goodbyes will be hard it feels it is a fitting place to end. I had the dream of the pilgrimage, but it really could not have happened without the young adults' willingness and trust to participate, but also the unending support and practical help and presence of MariJoxe, Jaime SJ and then Alicia fcJ and the faithfulness of Peter Randall SJ who accompanied us all the way. And of course, it is with gratitude to God who met me in the possibility and made it happen. So for all my helpers along the way, as well as those who welcomed us in and the pilgrims who have journeyed with me I give thanks to God and to them for an amazing journey and move on knowing God has indeed done great things and for that I give thanks.



“ Never give way to discouragement, for it will be our ruin. Courage and confidence! Let that be your motto. (1837) ”

Marie Madeleine d'Houët

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