

PILGRIMAGE

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My spiritual journey started as I grew up in a parsonage on the Danish island of Aeroe, going to Church and Sunday School, and as a Girl Guide with the KFUM Scouts. Later I joined the Danish Christian movement for Christian High School students, and read Theology at Aarhus and Uppsala universities. My “spiritual CV” also shows the influence of the Christian Student Movement in Aarhus and work at the Diocesan Office and at St. David’s Retreat Centre and Meditation Centre in Rättvik, Sweden. My background and the driving force behind me is ecumenical, and during nine years when I was employed as a pastor at the Cathedral in Copenhagen I had the pleasure of being responsible for the inter-church relations of the Danish National Evangelical Lutheran Church. This gave me many opportunities to meet sisters and brothers from other Christian communions and experience the strength of the universal Christian Church under very different circumstances and often in very different forms. It gave me the courage to experiment with different forms of ministry and church services.

The way I see God is simple: God loves every person infinitely and unconditionally, as in the words of the Lord from Isaiah 49, 15: “Can a woman forget the infant at her breast, or a mother the child of her womb? But should even these forget, I shall never forget you.” As the years go by, my baptism has come to mean more and more in my life. This was the start of the pilgrimage, where God promised to go with me to the end of the world. And I have personally experienced how, at the crossroads in life, God is there as Christ, the pilgrim. “For you have rescued me from death and my feet from stumbling, to walk in the presence of God in the light of life.” (Psalm 56, 14). It is truly the work of the Holy Spirit, when our “heart of stone” becomes a “heart of flesh”, and when the “field of the spirit is watered”, as the ancient Christian mystic: Meister Eckhardt would have expressed it. That is when we are ready for the words of the Bible to be sown “in good earth” and come to life in the heart.

Both the theology of liberation and Christian spirituality have played an important part in my life. Benedict of Nursia’s motto: “Ora et labora” – as it links prayer and work, contemplation and action, the inner and outer life, reminds me of the importance of ritualising faith in everyday life.

Through 26 years of service as a priest I have sought to give the church a body, and to speak to the heart and the senses – through prayers, pictorial meditation, retreats, meditation over the Bible, spiritual guidance, and now pilgrimage. My objective is to talk about the greatness of God and the Trinity. Wherever God’s people meet, the Gospel can be preached, no matter whether it is in a church or in the open air. When the stories of our lives are entwined with the stories of our faith in conversation, prayer, the hymns we sing, the celebration of the Communion and reading the Bible, it sometimes happens that people begin to praise God and thank him for the gift of life. The Holy Spirit has done his work. That is when the pilgrim reaches his goal of creating space to meet the living God.

“When can we come with you on a pilgrimage?” I was asked by a confirmation candidate in 2000, when I enthusiastically told them about my experiences of walking through Spain. I was caught up in his eagerness, and answered that we could certainly go on a local mini-pilgrimage. But then going on the pilgrimage was to be voluntary, and the young confirmation candidates would have to give up a

whole Saturday, to walk 25 kilometres and be prepared to celebrate Communion in the open air, and to walk for an hour in silent prayer. Great was my surprise when forty confirmation candidates put down their names. Even their parents begged to be allowed to come too. I promised to organise another walk later for the grown-ups, and I set off on a spring day with the confirmation candidates to the hills of Mols. We were in high spirits as we trudged along. My husband had planned a route through varying countryside with a break at the village church in Agri. He led the way and I brought up the rear. I rejoiced to see my confirmation candidates walking in single file, in silent prayer as they went up over the three ancient mounds at Trehøje and past Toggerbo to a Communion meal in the natural amphitheatre at Tinghulen. Who would have believed that thirteen-year-olds could be quiet for a whole hour? I felt it was a truly historic moment when it came into my mind that this must be the first pilgrimage in Denmark since the Reformation. And that pilgrimage was definitely not the last! - After the confirmation, one of the boys declared that “The pilgrimage was the best thing about preparing for confirmation.”

As a result of this first encouraging experience of a pilgrimage as part of the preparation for confirmation, for the last five years a pilgrimage has been a regular element in my Christian teaching for children and young people. This experience shows how suitable pilgrimage is as a method of teaching confirmation candidates. The model can naturally be used with other groups. It is necessary to give children a way of practising their faith. We remember physically through our bodies: “It was fun to have a Communion in a two-metre-high snowdrift,” is how one boy remembered his preparation for confirmation. We learn when we are on the move. “So the Word became flesh; he made his home among us,” as in John 1, 14. And that is why I have gradually extended the idea of pilgrimage for the young people. My wish is to give them some tools, a way of practising their faith, so that they know what to DO, when one is a Christian.

As instructor, leader or priest, it is necessary to be personally drawn into the situation and to have the courage to pass on your own experience of life. This might mean, for instance, telling others frankly about the wrong turnings and blind alleys in one’s own life. Authentic stories from personal experience and faith promote nearness. Besides, it is quite obligatory to talk simply about the great things, so that children and young people are gripped by the message of Christianity, or in other words, one must try to tell the stories of the Bible from the perspective of the feet and not the perspective of the head!

It is while we are walking along that the good conversations arise. In our rucksacks we carry only the barest necessities, like a sleeping bag and a water bottle. This simplicity frees up thoughts and contemplations that can easily be hidden or forgotten in our busy daily lives: where have I come from, where am I going, and what is the purpose of my life in the brief time I have been given? “The days of a mortal are as grass; he blossoms like a wild flower in the meadow: a wind passes over him, and he is gone, and his place knows him no more.” (Psalm 103, 15). The Bible story helps us to understand life as a journey from death to life.

A pilgrim “goes out into the inner world”. The outer, physical journey is linked with the inner, spiritual journey: the longing for God. The monotonous steps of one’s feet become a rhythm for meditation, or a kind of monastic life on foot. Pilgrims following their path “pray with their feet!” The pilgrim sees the inner landscape behind the outer one: an invisible extra dimension beyond the temporal things of this world. Is it perhaps necessary to move physically to be able to move mentally? In an age with so many

rapid changes, endless streams of information, a fast pace and overfilled diaries, the idea of pilgrimage stands out in relief as a different way of life, giving time for silence, reflection, slowness, simplicity and inner peace.

There is a difference between a tourist and a pilgrim. The tourist travels from A to Z, horizontally. In contrast the pilgrim takes in the vertical dimension as well: inwards and upwards. What makes a journey into a pilgrimage is that we pray and hold services together. It is not necessary, therefore, to travel to distant countries to be a pilgrim.

In his diary, *Markings*, Dag Hammarskjöld noted that “The longest journey is the journey inwards!” In other words, we have to begin with ourselves. This is where the true pilgrimage begins, which also travels inwards. If we go far enough on this pilgrimage of the soul, we can feel a fellowship with all people through all ages, and with all living creatures, and indeed with the whole natural creation.

We are pilgrims on our way. Our pilgrimage reminds us of life as a journey and a path. Baptism is the source of life and the beginning of our journey. Baptism means becoming part of Christ. We are baptised into his death and resurrection (Rom 6, 3-6). When we “pop our clogs”, when we reach the end of our earthly journey, we may think we have reached our Cape Finisterre (the end of the world), but the path goes on to “the heavenly Jerusalem”, or the garden of Paradise, where God is all in all. - At Communion we find the same theme: we are able to share all of our path in life, and offered a share in Christ and with Christ, who walked the path before us. The Communion is offered as food for our journey, and as nourishment that is not anchored in ourselves, but in God.

Pilgrimages, journeys in prayer, Bible journeys, special theme journeys and attendance in church are all ways of seeking roots, identity and context. Yet they are also ways of breaking out of the materialism of our age and our self-centredness to search for completely different values: fellowship with God, with each other and with His creation.

The experience of walking as a pilgrim can bring healing, since the pilgrim looks at his or her own way of life: is it a way to God, and a path to walk in his presence, under his leadership? Even on short pilgrimages, there are valuable experiences to gather up, which can bring about changes in body and soul, influencing daily life and strengthening faith.

The Church as God’s people on a journey

“When people do not come into the church, we must go out with the Gospel!”

Today, many Danes feel uncomfortable about going to church. The thick walls and the rituals strike them as constrictive and dogmatic, or meaningless bureaucracy. But out in the towns and streets there is an enormous missionfield: thousands of people who are searching and longing to come closer to God. I have experienced how people thirst for God like the hind that pants for water by a dried-up river bed (Ps. 42, 2). Very many Danes are experimenting and trying to put together their own religious quilt as a patchwork, resorting to Eastern philosophies and religions. But a Danish proverb says you need not cross the river to fetch water. We have an enormous store of treasure in the established Danish church,

the Evangelical Lutheran Church; we only need to take our heirlooms out of their strongbox and polish them, for they are simply waiting to be used: prayer, meditation about the Bible, retreats, spiritual guidance and pilgrimage.

As a congregation and as “living stones” therefore, we must not shut ourselves in behind thick walls or unbending rituals. Just as the Son of God always went out in the streets and market places or to the mountains and lakes, we must go out and meet people where they are. We must offer them the Gospel and hope that the meaning of the Word will strike them, so that more will want to come into the church.

The story told in the Bible stretches between two extremes: the beginning of the world and its end – the Creation of a new heaven and a new earth, where God himself will live among the nations. As Christians we are part of the migration which makes up the story in the Bible about God and Man. The message of the Bible is that God goes with us.

In the Bible we can read many stories where the scene is set against a background of natural scenery: beside a lake, on a mountain, in desert places or where there is green grass. God’s Word sends people out on their journey. Adam and Eve made the first journey after the Fall, when they were driven out of the Garden of Eden. (Gen. 3). Later on, Abraham was sent out by God, and wandered about, looking for a new home. This was the land God was going to give him. Abraham left behind him his safe and familiar world, his land, his family and the gods of his forefathers (Gen. 12, 2).

The Children of Israel were also sent on a journey (Ex., Lev., Num.). They too broke away from the familiar safety of their life in Egypt – as captives who sought a new freedom. Wandering in the desert has never been a pleasant experience, either then or now. But for the Children of Israel it was necessary, so that they could be led on their way.

As a people, Christians are always on their way from one place to another. Jesus spoke of himself as: “The Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14, 6). He wanted to bring the joyful message to everyone, not least the sick and the poor, those who were weary and exhausted. That is why he could not stay in a single place. Many times in the New Testament we find the expression: “Jesus went around” – Galilee, the region, from one place to another. He was on a lifelong pilgrimage. In him, in his actions, in words and in communal meals, God himself comes down among people. Jesus was homeless, living on the streets, from hand to mouth. “Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lie down and rest.” (Luke 9, 58). This image brings out all the tension that we humans are subject to on our life’s journey: we are of necessity bound to the earth to sustain life, it is true, but it must not lead us to bury ourselves in worry and concern to secure our own existence. Contact with Heaven is vital too, our orientation and the hope of a lasting goal. Again, the longing for heaven must never become a denial of life. Jesus kept both together. He never spoke to people’s minds alone. He touched them, healed them, and cared for the whole person: body and soul. It helped him on his journeys when his feet were always firmly in touch with the earth. He went on foot when he went out to the sick, the beggars and the children. He squatted down on his heels to wash the disciples’ feet.

The way Jesus lived in the disciples’ faith is demonstrated in the walk to Emmaus (Luke 24). Luke gives the answers here to questions asked by the apostles and all the others who set out on their wanderings: two disciples are walking on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, and the risen saviour

appears as their travelling companion. As they walk together and talk, the disciples learn what this means. The scriptures are discussed and explained by the risen Jesus as he walks along. In Emmaus he sits still and stays for a moment, but only in the role so typical of him, as a guest. “Stay with us; the day is almost over, and it is getting dark.” But the risen saviour is “one who passes through”, a pilgrim, a companion, a sojourner on the earth, who leaves those he meets with their hearts burning. The story of the walk to Emmaus is the fascinating experience of God’s presence on our wandering – and his absence the moment we are just about to grasp him – both literally and mentally.

After Jesus’s death people left their homes – to carry the message of the Kingdom of God to the people of the world. As far as can be seen from reconstructions of the Acts of the Apostles, the first Christians kept themselves alive through wanderings, moving from house to house and staying with each other as guests. The apostles took their mission as messengers on foot very seriously; and this is especially borne out through the numerous journeys and travels of Paul. Many listened and were converted like the Ethiopian official on his travels (Acts 8, 26-39). God’s kingdom was spread by these journeys. Thus Christian people are on a journey – sent on their way by the Bible. During the first decades of the history of the church, Christianity was translated as “The Way” (Acts 19, 9 + 23), and the Christians were “Followers of the Way” (Acts 9, 2). The church is not, therefore, something fixed and stationary, but moves along as “God’s people on their journey”.

However, in the constantly expanding local congregations, which soon had their own bishops, the movement of mission gradually became more and more static. During the first centuries there were all sorts of reasons for them to consolidate to protect themselves from external enemies. When Christianity was recognised as a state religion in the year 324, the church took on first and foremost a territorial nature. In this way the focus was displaced from a movement of belief or wandering apostolate, to a church with a fixed abode.

Throughout the history of the church there have always been groups who set off, either forced by persecution to flee, or when believers felt an inner spiritual need and dissatisfaction with the present structure of the church, and again acknowledged that the Gospel is itself making its journey on foot! The mediaeval movement of pilgrimage can be included in this category, just like the Danish “Church days” of our own times, which have always been regarded as a temporary movement.

Martin Luther’s expression for this movement was that “*Ecclesia semper reformanda est*” – that the church should always be in the process of reformation. The Lutheran Reformation began in 1517, when Martin Luther posted 95 theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg. This list must never be completed, since the church should always be digging down to its roots and preaching the gospel in new situations. If the church is ever to become a living church again, we must consider new means of expression such as pilgrimage, for the people of our times are mobile, and in a way nomads. We travel and move about because of our work. The new Swedish Church Act takes the consequence of this fact and the church is directly defined as “*all who live in pass through the parish*”! And therefore the church must be a spiritual resting place on the route, providing spiritual food for nomads and sending the travellers on their way with renewed strength. When today the church is taking up pilgrimages and journeys to holy places, it is one of the ways of living as Christians in our age. On pilgrimages we accompany each other in our study of the gospel – the gospel of the living God, who comes to

accompany living, enquiring people in their search. In this connection priests act as spiritual guides who can help others to see their lives – with all their crossroads – in the light of faith.

And now Danish Christians are once again standing at a fork in the road – in the sense that for financial, structural and ethical reasons the Folkekirke is being challenged. Once the first church buildings have been sold, perhaps the present institution will allow more freedom for “God’s people on their wandering”.

The Christian pilgrimage – a survey

This church-historical survey of Christian pilgrimage has been written to help the instructor to place the young people’s journey in a wider perspective. Reference is also made to Jørgen Johansen’s comprehensive work *Gyldendals bog om pilgrimme og pilgrimsrejser / Gyldendal’s book of pilgrims and pilgrimages*.

What is the definition of a pilgrim? The word pilgrim is derived from the Latin “peregrinus”, which means a foreigner or stranger. Peregrinus is again derived from “per agrum” in Latin, which means “one who crosses the field”, and thus one who passes through and goes further. In other words, a pilgrim means a stranger. Gradually it came to mean someone who travels far to visit a holy place, to perform devotions and to return home again. And thus the word encompasses the tension: the pilgrim is of this world, but the word also means a spiritual traveller, whose destination is heaven.

In a way, we are all strangers for the brief life we live on earth. According to the biblical tradition Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden, and since then man has lived “in exile”, with yearning in his heart. We live in the world, but are not of the world. Our home is in heaven. One of the Fathers of the Church, St. Augustine, puts it beautifully in this prayer: “Our hearts were made for you O Lord, and they are restless until they rest in you.” Heaven is the beginning and the end of our lives.

All religions include pilgrimage as an important religious practice. Visiting holy places is perhaps the religious custom that is most easily observed and recognised in the cults of different religions. In the history of the Christian church the classic places of pilgrimage were Jerusalem, Rome, Santiago de Compostela and Trondheim. Muslims make pilgrimages to Mecca, while Hindus go to the holy river Ganges in India. At the time of Jesus the disciple would forsake their everyday lives and follow Jesus on his many long journeys. This was not an escape from reality, but a means of finding it.

The first Christian pilgrimage with witnesses took place in the years 326-27, when the Emperor Constantine’s mother, Helena, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to see with her own eyes the places where Jesus had lived and walked. She found several sacred objects, holy relics that were regarded as a kind of “hot line” to our Lord, and made possible a special contact with things above. In the Catholic Church it was accepted at an early stage that Jesus and later on the saints possessed a heavenly power that remained in their bones or skeletons – even after death. This power was so strong that it could also be transferred to others by touching, or simply being close to it. This is how the “holy places” arose, as places where Jesus or one of the saints was buried. Meanwhile there must already have been large numbers of Christian pilgrims even earlier, since there was a discussion for and against pilgrimage at the Ecumenical Council of Nicæa in 325. The opponents pointed out that it is possible to find God

everywhere, not only in Jerusalem – and besides, there were far too many temptations on the way! Yet these arguments made little impression on the people: pilgrimage had come to stay! St. Helena's journey started a movement of enquiring spirits, especially from the upper classes, who could afford to make such a long journey. The Crusades put an end to these journeys of pilgrimage, however. From then on Rome became the destination for pilgrimages, as the city where the apostles Peter and Paul had served their ministry and died as martyrs. Then in 1100 both Jerusalem and Rome were overtaken as places of pilgrimage by Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Hostels, chapels, churches, monasteries and hospitals appeared on a large scale to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of the pilgrims.

Penitential pilgrimages in the Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages the pilgrim tradition grew stronger and stronger, often in the form of penitential pilgrimages to obtain the forgiveness of sin. At one period some 20- 50% of the adult population of Europe took part in pilgrimages and wanderings. A pilgrim wore special clothing: a large cloak, heavy boots or shoes, a pack on his back, a hat for protection from sun and wind, and a staff, which was often handed over at a special church service to send him on his way. The emblem of pilgrimage guaranteed the wanderer free lodging at the inns that were built along the pilgrim routes.

This great hospitality was a response to the words of Jesus: "Whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me!" (*Matt. 25, 45*). Benedict of Nursia (480-543), the founder of the western monastic tradition, elaborated on this idea in his monastic Rule in 529: "When you receive a pilgrim, you receive Christ!" A pilgrim was precisely one of these "least important": a humble soul.

In most cases these journeys were made on foot, "on the apostles' horses", but if the journey was long, it was possible to sail, ride or drive in a carriage. People had different reasons for making the journey. Some went looking for adventure and because they needed to get away from their families. Others went as a penance, to atone for their sins and to receive forgiveness, or be healed from diseases.

For a limited period of the church's history there was yet another reason for a kind of pilgrimage – the holy wars in the attempt to free Jerusalem from the rule of Islam. The history of the Crusaders (especially from 1100-1200) is a dark period in our tradition, which was founded on a misguided allegiance to God's cause. This phase of pilgrimage was followed by the wanderings of the mendicant monks.

St. Francis, the little poor man of Assisi in Italy, started a movement throughout Europe with his order of Grey Friars. From the beginning of the 13th century thousands of devoted Franciscans wandered all over the world as pilgrims. They were known as the mendicant monks and travelled first and foremost along the main highways, placing themselves at the service of others in towns and villages.

The great places of pilgrimage in the Middle ages were Jerusalem, Rome, Santiago de Compostela and Trondheim – cities that still have a strong power to draw pilgrims to them today.

Built into the altars of many Danish village churches there used to be little caskets containing relics – remains of the bones of saints, their clothes, or perhaps even a drop of blood. Visitors to the churches could ask for the forgiveness of sins or healing from disease.

Martin Luther's rejection of penitential pilgrimage

The Pope had issued a decree that for anyone who made a pilgrimage to St. James's grave the time in purgatory would be halved, and a pilgrim who departed this life in Santiago de Compostela would go directly to heaven! In the end, however, the concept of the pilgrimage became inflated and finally abused through professional pilgrims, who were paid to make the journey in the name of others! Thus Queen Margrethe I has as many as 44 pilgrims in her service! The German monk, Martin Luther, challenged this "justification by deeds" with his focus on "justification by faith alone." In 1519 he decided that pilgrimages should be abolished because they had degenerated so far into abuse. Luther observed: "Why does a man leave his own priest, God's word, his wife and child at home, even when they are necessary and obligatory, and run off after the Devil's delusions, which are unnecessary, uncertain and harmful?" Since the Reformation (1536) pilgrimage has not been practised in the Protestant churches of Northern Europe.

Nevertheless, Luther's exposure of abuse is not necessarily the same as the abolition of pilgrimages. Our own experiences also show repeatedly that along the way it is necessary to make room for what according to Luther's Little Catechism is the most important thing that can be said of a person: that he or she receives the whole of life with everything necessary for body and soul as God's gift: "... and for all this I owe thanks and praise and service to God". The most important thing in life is to learn to thank God. When prayer, hymn-singing, celebrating Communion and Bible-reading are linked up with "the others" in the quiet or walking, then what happens is that humans begin to praise and thank God (and not themselves and their own excellence) for life. That is when the pilgrim achieves the purpose of the journey.

In the eighteenth century the Pietists wrote hymns, prayed, and yearned for the goal of the pilgrim – the open gates of Heaven. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, written by the English writer John Bunyan, became a best seller, and strongly influenced the thinking of the protestant population of the time. The yearning for Heaven was great, but the pilgrimage itself was subdued. It dealt more with the inner, spiritual pilgrimage.

Today – almost 500 years later – the idea of pilgrimage has been reborn in the way restless modern people need inner peace and quiet. The inner journey embodied in the outer journey.

Pastoral walk with a confirmation candidate

One-to-one with the priest – spiritual guidance with each individual confirmation candidate

It is natural to offer each confirmation candidate a chance to talk one-to-one with the pastor as part of the teaching. One can hope it will give them the necessary outspokenness later in life to be able to

discuss problems with a priest. Many people thirst for genuine guidance in their relations with God and in their practice of prayer. The very best setting for a meeting like this is on a walk: think of the Christian guidance *par excellence* when the two disciples met Christ on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24, 13-35). When a person studies the Bible daily and identifies with the universe of the Bible texts, more and more of the mind will be occupied by the Bible, and in this way a person can gradually be said metaphorically to travel on life's journey through a biblical countryside. It makes everyday events mirror themselves spontaneously in biblical events or people. And in this way the Bible texts provide guidance in specific situations in life.

Individual pastoral walk for a confirmation candidate and his/her priest

Duration 1 hour
 Distance 2-3 km. – One walks more slowly when carrying on a conversation
 Place In the countryside, off the beaten track

Preparation

- Make a definite appointment for the interview with the priest: half an hour in the spring and autumn

A pastor is always available for dialogue, pastoral care and confessions. It is a natural thing to offer spiritual guidance, or assistance with faith, to confirmation candidates, so that each can discover how God is present in his or her life. Topics for discussion might be: The family fellowship around faith, feelings of guilt, the loneliness of the heart, the yearning to come closer to God, help to form a daily ritual, help to break through the barrier of shyness and find assistance with praying and putting matters of faith into words. This can happen spontaneously on walks, at camps for confirmation candidates or after the formal teaching periods. Another possibility is to set aside two half hours for each confirmation candidate, e.g. on a Saturday afternoon, once in the autumn and once in the spring.

The Emmaus story shows how acknowledgement and experience meet in the spiritual room where fellowship is given the central position in Communion and prayer. The pastor must have the courage to meet the child at the child's eye level, and personally walk as a pilgrim through life, where doubts and faith go hand in hand.

Quite specifically, we can invite the child or young person to look at the landscape of life for himself – and then ask the question: What are you carrying in your spiritual baggage? What has your personal journey through life been like, and your path to faith? What do you yearn for? When we practice talking about our lives in this way, and our life with God, the child's own story is gradually entwined with God's story. The child or young person can be helped to see more clearly the paths God has walked with him or her through the different phases of life. Precisely where life has been difficult and God has seemed far away, the adult can help the child to understand that God is still with us even when we seem to be wandering in the wilderness on our life's journey.

Spiritual guidance consists first and foremost in accompanying the child along the way of prayer and of life. This is done in the conviction that the Way along which we meet life is Christ himself, and he personally gives us the truth which he considers each of us is capable of receiving at that given

moment. To be allowed to accompany another human being on the way to God is a great gift. Both will experience the truth in the words of Is. 12, 3: “With joy you will all draw water from the wells of deliverance!”

Some children and young people need especially to talk to a grown-up about their worries and sorrows. They may be about loneliness in connection with questions of faith, doubts and scruples, their parents’ quarrels, mobbing and so on.

During an Emmaus-walk it is natural to share the burning issues of the moment. Walking along, there is the chance to focus on the history of the child’s faith, or “spiritual CV” and discuss with each other what factors have been particularly important for one’s faith. Talks like these open up the possibility for the child to discover a personal language of faith. To start the child off, the pastor or leader can tell the story of his or her own faith: when or where she was baptised, who brought her to the font, who the godparents were, and whether there are any photos of the baptism day; which members of the family were there, and what gifts there were to remember the day by (a children’s Bible, a cross to wear, a silver spoon with name and date, a baptismal candle and the like); whether the family went to church regularly, and whether Bible stories were told or read aloud, and by whom; whether they said evening prayers or sang goodnight hymns – and with whom; and Sunday School, joining the Scouts, what teaching was given in preparation for confirmation etc.

Pastoral walks with confirmation candidates and adult parishioners

In a large parish the task is too great for a single pastor to take on individual interviews with all the confirmation candidates. Nevertheless, it is often possible to find committed people who will help – perhaps among those who work for the church: the parish worker, the gravedigger, the sacristan, the verger, the organist – or people in the parish: members of the parish council or other churchgoers who are willing and have the internal and external resources to go on a walk. The conversation should go in both directions, with the grown-ups sharing some of the burning issues that occupy the young people’s minds. Before the conversation walk the priest could call the parishioners, and introduce the topics with a request that they prepare for a two-way conversation. It is best if the confirmation candidate and the grown-up each work out their own questions that they would like to discuss – each making out a list before the walk. The confirmation candidates can do this as a group assignment, so that they can inspire each other.

Duration	1 hour
Distance	2-3 km.
Place	Somewhere undisturbed in the countryside

Preparation

- Make agreements with people from the parish that they will come on the walk with the confirmation candidates – either through the parish magazine, on the telephone or through meetings. Prepare them for spiritual discussions and let them draw up their own list of questions to the confirmation candidates
- Let the confirmation candidates write down their questions to the grown-ups

The following questions can perhaps be used as inspiration to start off the discussion.

Questions to ask and discuss with confirmation candidates

- What is the most important way you have benefited from preparing for confirmation?
- What is the highlight of the service for you?
- Who can you talk to about the big questions of faith and things like that?
- Do you want anything religious for your confirmation?
- What is your favourite Bible story?
- Which is your favourite bead in Christ's string of beads? Why?
- What have you cut into your pilgrim's staff – and what do the symbols mean?
- Which Bible text have you chosen? Why?
- How will your confirmation be celebrated?
- Who will be coming to the party?
- What presents do you want?
- Confirmation – your “credo”: What is it you believe in?

Questions to the grown-ups

- In what ways do you imagine God? How did you see God at first? How do you see him now?
- How do you pray, or do you talk to God? How do you practise your religion today?
- Who told you Bible stories when you were a child?
- Who taught you to pray?
- Why do you really go to church?
- What do you like best about the services?
- Baptism – when were you baptised, where, and who was there? (Family and godparents), and have you a gift you were given? What does your baptism mean to you today?
- What do you remember from your own preparation for confirmation? – The teaching, going to church, Bible text, party, clothes and presents?

- If you are married, were you married in church? If so: why did you choose a church wedding?
- Which of the *Pilgrim's seven keywords* would you choose? Slowness, freedom, simplicity, freedom from care, silence, fellowship or spirituality? Why that particular choice?

