

THE  
**PILGRIMAGE**

**THE WAY OF THE PILGRIM — SESSION THREE  
ENCOUNTER & STRUGGLE**

March 15, 2025

# Share with your Small Group:

† Your name and location.

† A time when you *encountered* God and/or  
*struggled* with God.

“Every [person] has two journeys to make through life. There is the outer journey, with its various incidents and milestones . . . There is also an inner journey, a spiritual Odyssey, with a secret history of its own.”

– William Ralph Inge

“Pilgrimage is mysticism as an  
outward journey.

Mysticism is an inward Pilgrimage.”

*Image & Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* by – Victor & Edith Turner

# The Pilgrim's Compass



Compass —  
From Latin  
words  
meaning  
“step  
together”

*When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the LORD...*

## An earthly encounter

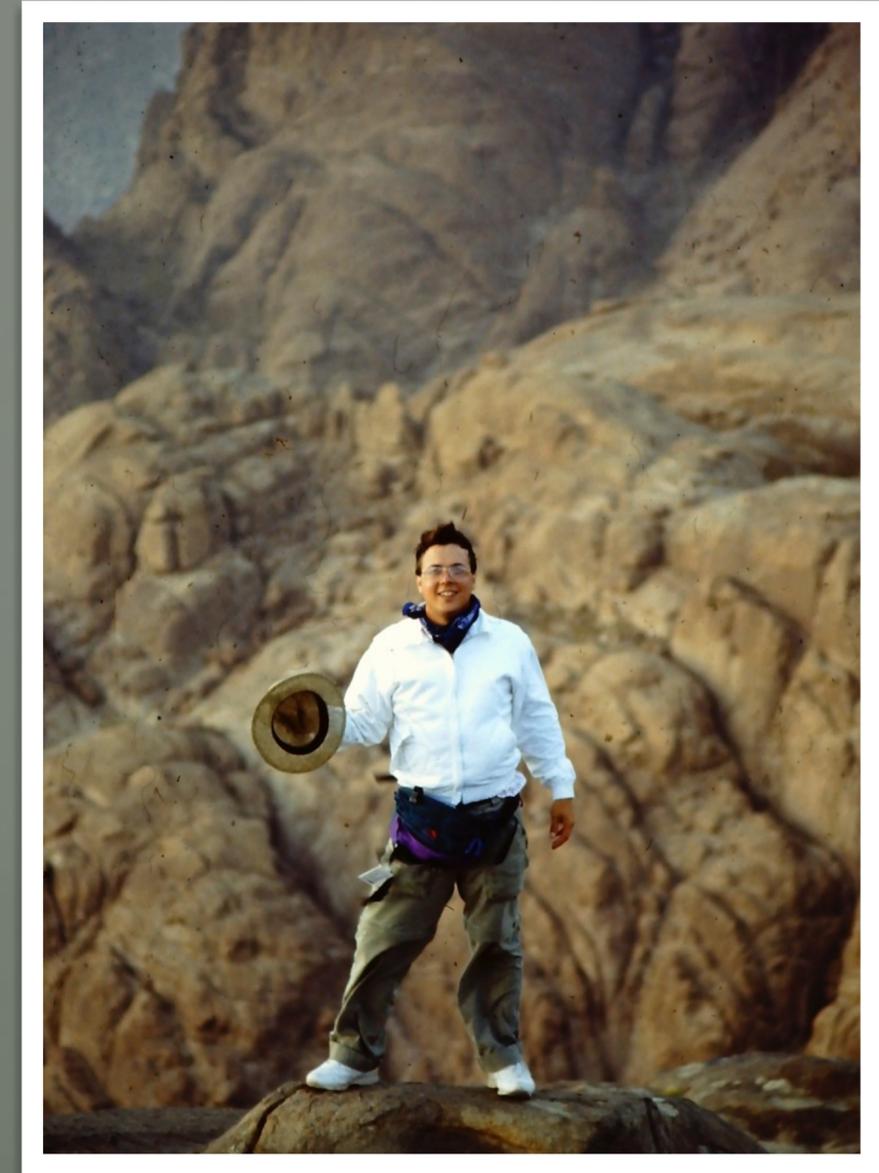
- Not “in the sky by and by.”
- Not in esoteric or ecstatic experiences.
- But in the world
  - Where life is lived.
  - Among other people.
  - In our work & play

## Amid turmoil & peace

- In the restless spirit.
- In the hustle & bustle of daily life.
- In the still small voice.
- In the contemplation of love.
- In prayers of resting in God's grace.

## Encounter — a burning bush

- An encounter that “leaves a mark.”
- An encounter tangible enough to authorize a radical departure.



Encounter — an invitation to looking for God

- Hidden everywhere.
- Sometimes seems like a pro at hide & seek.
- Rabbinical Story.

Encounter — God in the stranger

- Matthew 25 - the poor and marginal.
- Luke 24 - Stranger on road to Emmaus.
- Genesis 32 - Jacob wrestles with a stranger...

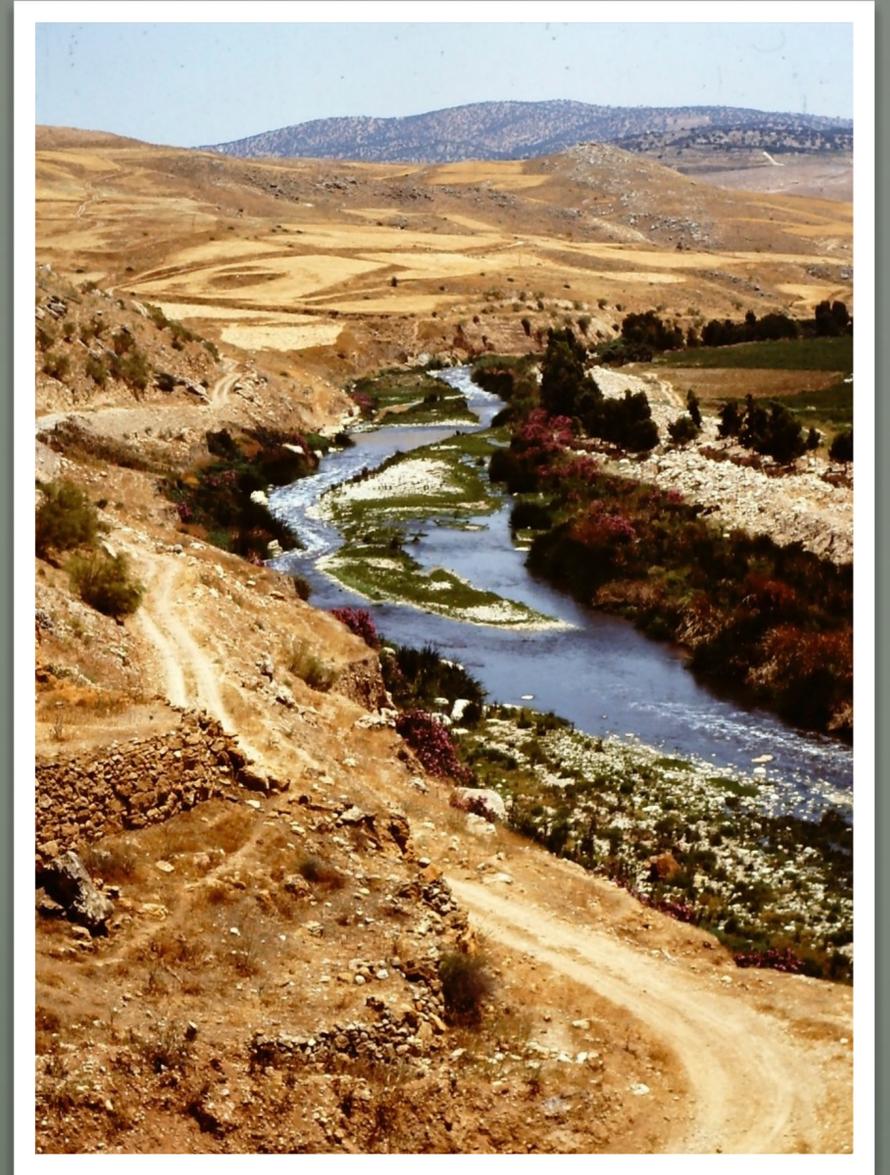
## Discuss:

† Having considered *encounter* more closely can you think of obstacles to your encounter with the Holy?

† Are there times / places / people who naturally seem to encourage an encounter?

Struggle

*The Jabbok river in  
Jordan . . . where Jacob  
encounters God and wrestles  
through the night.*



## A struggle-worthy relationship

- God in three *persons*.
- We have a living relationship with a living God.
- A relationship of love as opposed to indifference.
- Its authenticity means both endless grace *and* endless disputation.
- Sometimes to wring a blessing from this relationship requires that we wrestle earnestly.

## A Struggle to Understand

- “My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways,’ says the Lord.”  
Isaiah 55:8

- Understanding is not always the solution:

- "Saint Anthony was confused as he meditated upon the depths of God's judgements, and he asked God, 'Lord,, how is it that some die young and others grow old and sick? Why are there some poor and some rich? Why are there those who are bad and rich and oppress the good poor?' He heard a voice saying to him, 'Anthony, worry about yourself; these other matters are up to God, and it will not do you any good to know them.'"

— From *The Sayings of the Deserts Fathers*

- **Genesis 3** — desiring to be the arbiters of “good” and “evil.”
- **Jeremiah 2** — desiring to be self-sufficient and autonomous actors.
- **Luke 10** — desiring to have a private arrangement with God for our redemption (salvation) without regard to the needs of our neighbors.
- Each of the above is a way of living in God’s world that attempts to make us sovereign and demotes God.

## A Struggle With Loss

- What God desires for us is often first experienced as loss.
- We feel loss because what God desires often requires that the ungodly within us must die.
- We feel loss because we are not yet able to trust that God is doing something good and beautiful even in the midst of the painful and difficult.

- “. . . fallen man [sic] is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms. Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realizing that you have been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor - that is the only way out of a "hole." This process of surrender - this movement full speed astern - is what Christians call repentance.... It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means undergoing a kind of death.”

From *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis, the chapter on the Perfect Penitent

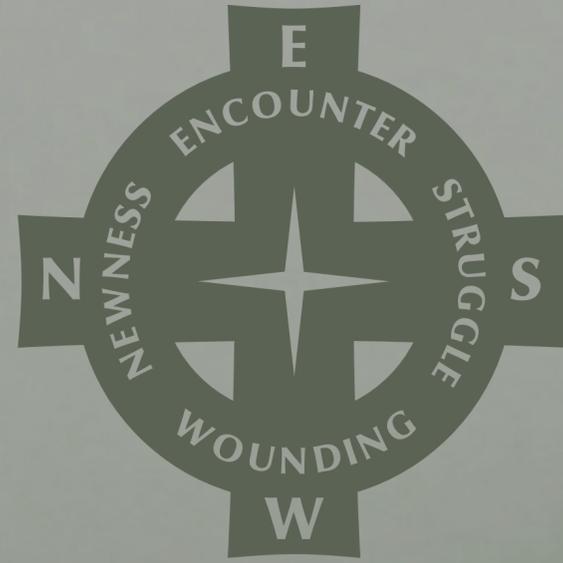
## Discuss:

† Having considered *struggle* more closely can you think of struggles which have led to deeper love and faith?

† How might God be using your struggles to shape your life?

## What We Will Explore in 2025

Jan. 11	SESSION ONE	Session One — Introduction
Feb. 8	SESSION TWO	The Pilgrim's Compass- Chapter 3- Tools for the Journey
Mar. 8	SESSION THREE	The Pilgrim's Compass- Encounter & Struggle
Apr. 12	SESSION FOUR	The Pilgrim's Compass- Wilderness & Newness: New Name
May 10	SESSION FIVE	Charisms of the Way of the Pilgrim
Sept. 13	SESSION SIX	Compass Group and Contemplative Disciplines
Oct. 11	SESSION SEVEN	Christian Prayer Toolbox
Nov. 15	SESSION EIGHT	Discernment



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