

The sacred in the everyday

Beloved person,

Recently, while walking my daughter's dog, I walked across a small bridge in a nature reserve near our house. Just before I took my first steps across the bridge, my eye was drawn to a sign nailed to a pole. It read: Route to Santiago de Compostela. In the area where we live, there are several hiking trails, including – as evidenced by this sign – pilgrimage routes.

Since I didn't grow up hiking, I often watch people go hiking with amazement. With their sturdy hiking boots and a full backpack, they follow the path. The 'why' of such a pilgrimage intrigues me. I read that it is a journey to a sacred place, often with religious or spiritual significance.

People undertake pilgrimages for reasons including searching for meaning, self-reflection, overcoming challenges, or experiencing a community and different cultures. So, people set out with a specific desire, walking for days or weeks through all kinds of weather, on their way to an unknown destination. I understand that reaching the destination is not the main goal. They primarily want to be open to what there is to see, hear, smell, encounter, discover, and experience during the walk. Perhaps even to catch a glimpse of the sacred during the walk...

...what she sought is what she now finds

land and water
sun and wind
mother earth
behold your child
father heaven
end and beginning

she walks, she runs
she loves and hopes
she is free
and in her mind
is truly nothing more that wants
no argument
it is only silence

every step is a welcome home
under her feet
only the track
she is her feet
she is the track¹

The longing for meaning and self-reflection is recognisable, but in our hectic society, where stimuli and opinions abound, it is often difficult to create space for this. It is a challenge to live consciously and mindfully.

How can a deeper layer, an invisible sacredness, be found in everyday moments? How can your daily life be like a pilgrimage? The pilgrims teach us that the sacred lies hidden in everyday reality. However, it takes practice to become receptive to it.

The moment you rest on a bench by the stream, the conversation at the kitchen table, that text message with encouraging words, a friend who unexpectedly drops by with an article in hand: "You have to read this." By being present with the right intention and full attention, such a moment can become a moment of awareness, connection, and deepening. In that sense, life itself becomes a pilgrimage, and every step you take is a step inward.

Ultimately, a path forms within you, a path of courage. Courage to pause. Courage to take the ordinary seriously. Courage to believe that the sacred does not (just) happen somewhere far away, but rather in the encounter between human and human, between human and world, and between human and self.

Whoever realises this stands with both feet on sacred ground. Wherever that may be.

*Teach me the art of the free moment.
Teach me to walk more slowly,
to see a flower,
to exchange a few words with a friend,
to pet a dog,
to read a few sentences in a book.*

*Teach me to live more slowly,
and grant me the desire
to be deeply rooted in the eternal ground,
so that I may grow toward my true destiny.²*

With a warm-hearted greeting, gladly your sister

Ineke Gerritse-Zwart



Attention for the baptism promise

¹ Freely translated from Dineke de Valde Harsenhorst (1965 - 2019)

² Freely translated from Anselm Grün (1945)