

THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF WALSINGHAM



Educational Resources

Experience England's Nazareth

WHAT DO PILGRIMS DO AT WALSINGHAM?



WHAT DO PILGRIMS DO AT WALSINGHAM?

Pilgrims come to Walsingham as individuals, or as a group, usually accompanied by their Parish Priest. They come for a day, a weekend visit or for a week. They follow a special programme of worship and devotion during their stay.

Before they leave, some parishes will organise a special meeting for pilgrims, others will celebrate the Mass or provide an opportunity for confessions. Pilgrims are encouraged to think of a particular intention for prayer for their pilgrimage and those unable to come should know that their needs and thanksgivings will be offered in prayer.

FIRST VISIT

Pilgrims always make a first visit to the Holy House to pray together and to offer prayers for others back home when they arrive. Pilgrims begin in front of the Altar of Annunciation. Behind the altar there is a large blue and white altar piece which shows the visit of the Angel Gabriel to the virgin Mary, when he asked her to become the mother of Jesus.



Pilgrims start their first visit here, because by looking at the image and hearing the Bible passage about it, they can focus their hearts and minds on the moment that the Christian journey began.

Next, they move to the Holy House, where pilgrims remember the example of Mary who obeyed God's will. They ask her to join with them in their prayers to Jesus.



SPRINKLING

Pilgrims take part in Sprinkling at the Holy Well at least once during their pilgrimage. The priest offers a sip to drink, marks the sign of the cross on the pilgrim's forehead and pours it into their hands. Sprinkling reminds them of the gift of life, of their baptism and of the constant generosity of God's love.



LAYING-ON OF HANDS AND ANOINTING

At some point in the pilgrimage there is an opportunity to receive the laying-on of hands and to be anointed. This is one of the most ancient forms of Christian prayer. Pilgrims are invited to share their need for wholeness and healing and a fellow Christian lays hands on their head. They then pray for them in silence. Pilgrims can also ask for prayers for a friend or loved one.

The ministry of anointing is then available for those pilgrims who are sick. The priest anoints them on the forehead with holy oil and on the palms of their hands.



PROCESSION OF OUR LADY

Processions are a distinctive feature of worship at Walsingham. Pilgrims take part in a candle-lit procession, where the statue of Mary is carried around the grounds of the Shrine and sometimes around the village. Each pilgrim holds a candle and it is a celebration to honour Mary and to worship her son, Jesus. The procession also reminds pilgrims that we are a company of people on the move.



STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Another journey that pilgrims make is to follow the Stations of the Cross.

These are a set of 15 pictures and models which show what happened to Jesus from when he was on trial to when he was buried. Christians believe he rose from the dead and a model tomb with the stone rolled away recalls this. Pilgrims stop at each 'station' to listen to the story, reflect on what happened and pray.



MASS

Pilgrims usually attend Mass/the Eucharist each day. Celebrating the Eucharist means thank you. It is the way Christians describe their celebration of the last supper, that Jesus shared with his disciples. Christians in Catholic and Orthodox traditions believe that the consecrated bread and wine used in communion become something very special and holy. At the last Passover meal Jesus shared with His disciples he said, 'This is my body' and 'This is my blood.' Catholic and Orthodox Christians believe this in a literal way - in other words, that the bread becomes Jesus' actual body and the wine his actual blood. In other churches, Christians believe that Jesus meant his words in a symbolic way - that the bread and wine are simply reminders of Jesus' death.



BENEDICTION

Pilgrims also attend a service of Benediction. At this ceremony the 'Host' or consecrated communion wafer (which pilgrims believe has become for them the Body of Christ at the Mass) is taken out of the Tabernacle by the priest and is displayed in front of them in a Monstrance. This is a very special way of being close to Jesus. The Host is lifted up and across so as to trace the shape of a cross before the congregation. This act, which has been part of the Church's worship for many centuries, is a special way of asking God to bless His people.

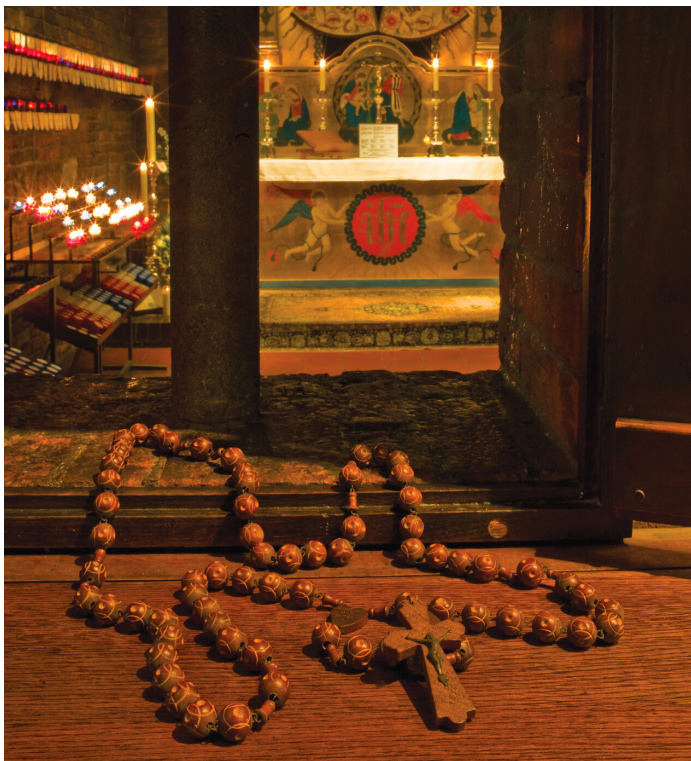


PRAYER

The Shrine is a place of constant prayer. Pilgrims light prayer candles in the Holy House and in the Shrine church.

Shrine prayers are a key part of the life of the Shrine. Many write prayers and post them in the intercession box in the church. Each evening at 6.00 pm the prayers are read out. Prayer is at the heart of everything at the Shrine.

Many pilgrims say the Rosary whilst they are here. The Rosary is also said each evening in the Shrine church. The Rosary is a form of prayer using beads. It is a cycle of repeated formal prayers, such as the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary, done while thinking about important events in the lives of Jesus and Mary.



LAST VISIT

Before pilgrims depart, they gather in the Shrine church for a last visit and to say goodbye in the Holy House. This marks the end of their pilgrimage.

They thank God for all the blessings of their pilgrimage and ask Our Lady of Walsingham to pray for them as they return to their daily lives.

O Mary, Mother of Jesus, I thank God through your Son, for the grace of a happy pilgrimage, and for all that has happened to me while I have been here.

Pray for all those I have met here and for all my fellow pilgrims.

Pray that I may have a safe and happy return home, and that God may give me the grace to do at home what you have taught me to do here.

PEACE AND QUIET

Coming on pilgrimage is an opportunity to leave behind their hectic routines and spend time reflecting and recharging their spiritual batteries.

Many people tell of how coming here has helped them at crisis times in their lives when big decisions have had to be made. They describe being drawn here at such times. Many pilgrims just use their pilgrimage to relax and get closer to God.



SOCIAL GATHERING

Pilgrims also have a good time socially during their pilgrimage as did pilgrims of old. They enjoy spending time with other people and go out on trips into the countryside or visit the coast. They go to pubs and enjoy meeting other Christians!

