



Our Feet are Your Dwelling Place in Motion
Liz Valenté

Learning to See

A Guide for Local Pilgrimage

Lent and Eastertide 2026

Lent: An Introduction

Lent is the season in the Church's calendar that occupies the 40 days preceding Easter (not including the Sundays between Ash Wednesday and Easter).

Lent began as a season of preparation for catechumens (people who intended to be baptized) who intended to join the Church officially at the Easter Vigil. The 40 days preceding the Vigil functioned as a final period of fasting, prayer, and preparation before being received into the Bride of Christ. Eventually, the Church decided this practice would be good for everyone, not just the catechuminate.

As a season of penitence and discipline, and in light of what it precedes (namely Easter, the season of resurrection), it makes sense that a major theme of the season of Lent became death--the sorrow and inevitability of it, certainly, but also the way it should shape how we live our lives now. "Memento mori"--meaning, "remember you have to die"--is a kind of slogan for the whole season.

This remembrance is both practical and spiritual. On the one hand, remembering that you have to die can make you more intentional about how you live now. On the other hand, it also prepares us to receive anew the Good News of God in Christ: in rising from death, Christ has vanquished death's claim over our bodies as their permanent end. In his life and death Christ enters into competition with death; in his resurrection he shows himself to be the victor.

This is the Gospel. Let us prepare to receive it anew.

Becoming a “local” pilgrim

Fasting during Lent is often thought of and practiced on an individual level. We may all be doing some sort of fast at the same time, but we don't all practice the same fast or to the same degree of intensity. And this is for good reason: we're all at different points in our journey to God, possessing different needs and abilities with respect to fasting in all its forms.

That said, for a variety of reasons--not least the increasing fragmentation of our social fabric, increasing relational isolation, and the basic design of our cities--we already do most of what we do alone! And there is very little in the day-to-day rhythm of our lives that asks us to be present in our place: to slow down and pay attention to who and what is around us.

This is problematic for a number of reasons, not least because it makes us increasingly deaf to what God might be trying to say to us--what or who he might be calling us to see and move towards in love and service.

For this reason, it seemed good to us to invite you all to attempt a kind of shared act of penitence this year: A practice we're calling a “local pilgrimage.”

Pilgrimage is one of the most ancient forms of Christian penitence. It is a contemplative journey to a holy place as an act of devotion to Christ. A traditional pilgrimage is often years in the making and occurs some place far from home.

In addition to being an ancient practice, the image of the “pilgrim” is one of the most vivid descriptions of the experience of the Christian life. It recognizes that to become a Christian is to begin a journey from a “far country” to our home in God. As such, we should expect at times to be shocked by the staggering beauty of it all. Other times we should expect to be shocked by the vast darkness in which we find ourselves, unsure of the way forward. Sometimes we’re exhilarated, joyful. Sometimes we’re exhausted, and it’s all we can do to keep moving.

What’s true is that these scenes of exhilaration and the stories that go with them are always around us. We just need to be present and attentive enough to see them.

And so this year, instead of setting out on a pilgrimage far from home, we’re inviting you to attend to where God has placed you already: a journey through Lent and Eastertide in your own place to sanctify our vision for the world right in front of us.

The idea is simple: each day in Lent and Eastertide this year, commit to a 15-minute walk around the area where you live with no extra noise but the voices of the humans who are with you.

We want to learn to notice--to see, to recognize--what is actually and already happening within walking distance of our homes. As we learn to see what is true, we hope to grow in our ability to hear where and to whom God is calling us.

How to take a “local” pilgrimage

As a spiritual practice integrated into our common life, we want to focus our attention during these pilgrimages according to the themes of the liturgical season.

That means that in Lent, we want to look for what is wrong: look for the consequences of sin that make themselves known around us. What is there to grieve in your neighborhood? Where are people suffering? And how?

In Eastertide, we want to look for what’s being “resurrected.” Where is the Kingdom of God breaking through? Where are people and places being restored to health?

Once you’ve looked, write down one or two things you notice. At the end of the season, look over what you saw. Then, pray for God to show you where he might want you to go or what he might want you to do.

In sum, a “local” pilgrimage is:

- A daily 15-minute walk around your neighborhood with members of your household, whenever you can make it happen.
- In the space below, take 5 minutes after your walk to write down what you noticed.
- During Lent, write down one sighting per day of grief and suffering, and pray for it.
- During Eastertide, write down one sighting of new life or the presence of the Kingdom of God, and pray for it.

Sundays at 10 am
1101 Bainbridge St.
Richmond, VA 23224
allsoulsrva.org

