

On a Pilgrimage with ICC (International Catholic Community Wageningen)

Saturday 23rd of April 2022, 10:50am. “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them (Matt. 18:20).” A little more than 30 young catholic friends from our Titus Brandsma Parish gathered on the church square at the Bergstraat in Wageningen, dressed and packed to start an amazing walk of faith together between Wageningen, Renkum and Rhenen. The weather forecast for that day was very good, although it was still a bit chilly in the morning. Suddenly Luigi – one of the organizers – made the announcement that we could hit the road, and the journey had begun.



On our way towards Renkum

The first (unofficial) stage headed towards Renkum via Arboretum Belmonte. Everyone was in a good mood, and the participants started to chat enthusiastically with each other. At the Arboretum, a lot of selfies had to be taken with all the floral beauty on the background. Continuing across the Bergpad and the N225 road towards Renkum, we arrived at the Church of Our Lady in Renkum just after noontime. There, Fr. Henri celebrated the Holy Mass dedicated to our pilgrimage. In his homily, Fr. Henri referred to the many pilgrimages that had taken place in the past in honour of Our Lady of Renkum. He was very pleased that we had started such an adventure as well.



In silence throughout the flood plains

After a nutritious lunch and a group picture in front of the church, the first official stage of the pilgrimage had started. In two groups, one led Luigi and the other by Maurizio, we continued our journey through the flood plains between Renkum and Wageningen and partly across the Bergpad again. Special about this stage was that it was done in silence. As one participant stated: “The moments of silence during the pilgrimage reminded me of my true identity of being a child of God. From this realization I felt oneness with my fellow pilgrims and the beautiful nature surrounding us, created by the Divine creative intelligence, which is God the Holy Spirit.”



Across the dike towards the Gedachtenis-church in Rhenen

Next, as excited as children, we took the ferry between Wageningen and Randwijk, and continued across the dike towards Opheusden. For many, this was quite a long stretch. Therefore, we finally enjoyed a well-deserved break close to the ferry between Opheusden and the Blaauwe Kamer. After this break we started our final stage of the pilgrimage by taking that ferry and walking the gravel path between the Grebbeberg and the river towards the Gedachtenis-church in Rhenen. This final stage was completed in couples, in which even more profound conversations took place about our relationship with Jesus, our faith and our lives in general. This oftentimes led to touching moments, such as when two good friends Giulia and Andrea hugged and comforted one another after sharing some beautiful things with each other.



Magnificat and Rosary

And what an achievement it was when most of the group arrived at the Gedachtenis-church in Rhenen! There, the Magnificat and a Tenth of the Rosary was prayed to thank the Lord for the amazing experience on that day. For many, it really felt like crossing the goal of an insightful spiritual marathon. As organizers Luigi and Maurizio stated: “We

spent several days and nights thinking intensively on how to organize this day. We wanted to provide something enjoyable, while we also aimed to strengthen the mutual bonds and wanted to focus on our common faith and the journey towards the resurrected Lord.”

Blessed and grateful

As participant Francis confirmed: "The pilgrimage was one of the most meaningful and blessed walks of my life. From the moment it was announced in church, I felt in my heart that I had to do this spiritual homage to God as an offering and thanksgiving. I learned a lot from the sharings and life experiences of my fellow pilgrims, which made me appreciate my life even more, and realize how blessed I feel by our Lord God." Alan, another participant, added to that that in our busy lives it is oftentimes hard to realize what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Therefore, he is really thankful to have experienced this pilgrimage and to give this day as an offer to God.

It was a very personal and unique journey, which was experienced by every participant in a different way. And of course there also was a lot of time for laughing, joy and fun. Definitely, we want to organize these kinds of events more often for our parish in the future.

Written by Tom Hardy, with a lot of thanks to all the participants, and last but not least to the organizers Luigi Greselin en Maurizio Comandone.