

## Camino Ignaciano May 2018 - Some Reflections

So, I undertook the Camino Ignaciano in May 2018. Together with 13 other strangers from all over the world, I embarked on this journey - little did I expect that God would make this band of strangers a spiritual family, and take me on a journey that transcended the physical.



*(Our first selfie together, outside the Basilica in Loyola on day 1)*

As with the bone-setting Iñigo had to undergo, I felt my heart break over and over, but had to cling on to the promise of healing that followed. This, God did, in His gentle and loving way, as I walked in the slow, quiet awakening of dawn on each new day.

The parallel of this aspect of my spiritual life with Iñigo's physical life was not lost on me. I continue to journey with God after the Camino ended for me, but my soul always goes back to the Urola River and the beautiful Basque Country, where the journey of healing first started for me.

As I reflect on the many memories I have from that journey, I am so grateful for the richness of the experiences God gave me on the road. Here are a very small selection of my reflections.

### **1) God broke me, and healed me again.**

Much is made, and even more said, of the physical challenges of this Camino. However, far more challenging for me was experiencing the pain of heartbreak - but that was (mercifully) always accompanied by God's deep healing for my soul.

It was in the silence and solitude of long gravel roads, running alongside quietly flowing streams, that God was able to reveal deep wounds from long ago, which I thought had healed. However, like poor Iñigo's legs, God revealed that those wounds had healed badly - and they desperately needed treatment.



## 2) It really helps to have companions for the road.

There is an African saying, which goes something like this: If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

On the first night, I shared at our first meeting that my greatest fear is that I would not be able to physically complete this journey. Thankfully, God gave me this amazing spiritual family to encourage me, accompany me, journey with me along the way.

I would have called it quits at some point every day, if I was undertaking this journey on my own. However, there was always a friend to chat with when I simply needed companionship, a shoulder to lean on in times of fatigue, a buddy to belt out tunes with, or a warm smile and a chuckle to meet a funny joke.

More than that: there is an energy that comes with a group of people walking together, in silent meditation and prayer. This is something I had not experienced before, and which has enriched my previously solo experience of silence and solitude.

Family meals were the best - there was shouting for the bread, for the wine, for salt pepper meats veggies bread fruit to be passed to this person or that. The warmth of the gathering fostered connections, bonds that perhaps will not be easily broken or faded with time.



*(Thankful for paella prepared lovingly for us by the sisters in Cervera)*



Finally, this was a community that could hold a safe space for each other during our sharing sessions, unafraid to go deep, to recognise and hold each other in times of struggle, and celebrate in times of joy. After all, burdens are divided when shared, and joy multiplied.

### **3) Finding God in all things**

God revealed Himself everywhere for me, on this journey. He was in the wind, in the trees, in the flowers, in a plate of paella, in a sculpted figure adorning the facade of a church.

There's something to be said for finding God in creation. The endless green fields tinted a stunning crimson with wild poppies, the unbroken blue sky overhead, the breathtaking views of mountains in a distance that slowly became shifting rocks under our feet as we attempted to scale them (equally breathtaking, but in a completely different way!).



*(Mountains are beautiful, until you have to climb them)*



*(Wild poppies everywhere...)*



*(The struggle is real, thank God He sustains us!)*

## **Conclusion**

I am so grateful for this experience. The Camino has pushed me beyond my physical limits, and brought me deeper in my spiritual journey than ever before. As the song goes, God took me deeper than my feet could ever wander, and my faith has been made stronger in the presence of my Saviour.

Now, as I continue my spiritual journey back in my physical home in Singapore, I am so glad to be able to return freely to the Camino Ignaciano in my prayers, reflections, meditations and thoughts. Thank you, Father Josep and my beloved CamFam, for being companions on the road, walking the mile and sharing the load..

To God be the glory!