



Adventures With God:

Living the Camino in Daily Life

Fr Chris Gorton

The Camino Frances

The Spanish Adventure

Pamplona to Santiago de Compostela



Part Four: The Journey 2016





The Camino 2016

Que el Senor sea contigo en tus idas y venidas
Que el Senor sea contigo en tu trabajo en tu ocio
Que el Senor sea contigo en las collinas y los valles de la vida
Que el Senor sea contigo en compania y en soledad
Que el Senor sea contigo en todo peregrinacion y su final
Y todos las bendiciones de Dos Padre, Hijo y Espiritu Santo
permanezcan contigo para siempre Amen.

For mum and dad xxx

I found the blessing at Bolton Abbey and put it in Spanish in case I was asked to give a blessing on the way. It roughly translates as:

The Lord be with you in your goings and comings,

The Lord be with you in your work and your rest

The Lord be with you in the hills and the valleys of life

The Lord be with you in company and alone

The Lord be with you in all journeys and your end

And all the blessings of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit remain with you forever. Amen.



Day One Pamplona to Peunte La Reina

Thursday 2nd of June 2016



5.15 start at the Hotel in Madrid to be at the airport for the short flight to Pamplona. It all went very smoothly despite my efforts to find things to worry about! The shuttle to the airport was there as was my rucksack. Already spoken a lot of Spanish including to the taxi driver. Went to Pamplona cathedral where they tried to charge me three euro entry. Went to chapel where I finished last time, said a prayer and set off via a shop. Starting to remember how to deal with practicalities (note to self this is day 39 all together on the Way). Met two American women, one a nurse, the other a fitness trainer. Their RC faith very important to them and they were good company. Then met Erica from Italy but preferred speaking Spanish on the Way and can also speak French. Walked with her before lunch then later after lunch. There was talk on the Way that Puente de la Reine would be full, hundreds had set off from Pamplona. As it turned out there is plenty of room here in an Albergue that does bed, dinner and breakfast for 25 euro. So had a shower, messed about with rucksack for a bit, had a sleep for an hour, have just celebrated mass and now writing the first entry in the book my nephews bought me last year which I chose with my mum with the pen she had engraved The Camino 2015.

I can't imagine just how special the journey is yet or what a great gift it is from God but it feels wonderful to be here, like coming to visit a very good and special friend where you can



just pick up where you left off with all that's happened in between. Thought today - stop trying to find things to worry about! **AMDG**

Day Two Puente de la Reine to Estella

It's 2.00pm in the afternoon and I decided that I would write something now whilst clothes are drying in the machine. I ate



last night with Erica in the restaurant at the Albergue and it was a great meal for only thirteen euro. Then I looked at the maps for a time which I love doing and watched 'xtras the Spanish

programme - I think it made more sense after a day of speaking Spanish. Then in bed by 10.30pm. Woke at 6.00 and had some breakfast. One lady very anxious to set off. I understand why as she was walking quite slowly, so bound to be a long day, I thought. Erica had set off so was settling in to the thought of a quiet morning when she appeared. So we spent the morning walking. I knew that she was going to walk further today than me. So another morning of speaking Spanish. Arrived in Estella and saw there is a parish Albergue so found that. Just as I was waiting a chap from Australia called Mark arrives. I met the parish priest on the way to the Albergue so will concelebrate tonight.. Had a shower, washed clothes and writing this, I am hoping to do some icon painting later and eat out after Mass with Mark. So getting into the swing of things. It's working out OK with the rucksack so far. It's a bit heavy but not too bad and

obviously want to carry everything if I can. So really on The Way and it's an incredible thought that I have been given the opportunity. Thinking about finding way in reverse, but better idea to concentrate on here and now. I celebrated mass in library last night, but I think already said that!. Time for a rest I think!

Day Three Estella to Los Arcos

It's just after two in the afternoon and I have now arrived at Los Arcos. Not too far today and arrived just before midday. Staying at the municipal Gite for the princely sum of six euro and it's



very good. Yesterday I managed to start the icon and hope to do some more today. I've just bought two eggs and she gave me a little box (so might try to carry one). Last night the Mass was quite an experience for Sacred Heart. The priest was very busy and it was a bit frenetic. It reminded how important it is to be calm or else everyone else gets a bit stressed as well! We



had a procession (brilliant) Mass (I said some words) and Exposition and benediction. Then went for a meal with Mark, Australian policeman. Had a good laugh then back to a very crowded dormitory but slept well.

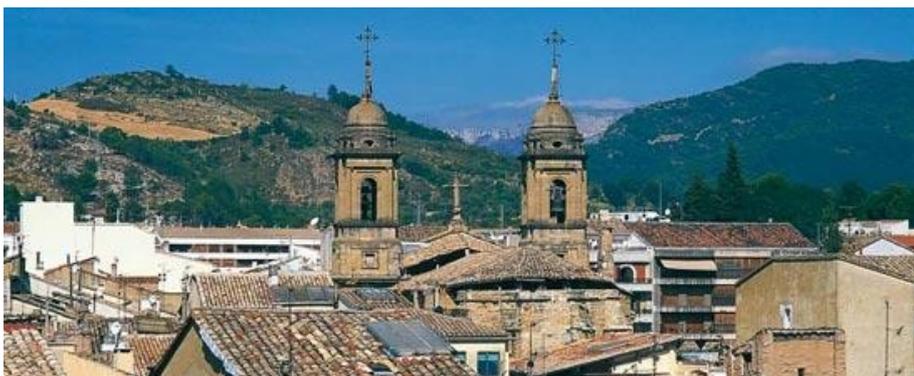
Set off just before seven and met an 81 year old ex marathon runner who knew David Cole. Only stopped running five years ago. Ended up speaking a lot of French this morning, which I am happy to say is definitely still there. Hopefully I can be the same with Spanish by the end of the Camino, then, concentrate on Italian. Enjoyed walking alone today after the first hour with Mark to the wine fountain which was closed until 8.00am. He wanted to drink out of shell. Bought food on the way and fruit and stopped for a coffee. So feeling it is possible to get things and a bit more relaxed. Mass 8.00pm tonight so will eat first. Someone has an app that looks very good, so going to try and find it and put on phone - thinking especially of after Santiago orjalla! So I know it's very early but getting into the swing of it and so far I'm loving it. 28k tomorrow - a lot of people are anxious about that. Should be OK with a 7.00 am start and a few breaks. God will provided.

AMDG



Day Four Los Arcos to Logrono

I'm sat on my bed with a beautiful view of the mountains in the



distance, and it is a single room. Basically I was given an upgrade! Yesterday I spent a good amount of time on the icon then had some rest.

Young American lad called Billy from Boston in the top bunk - only 18. Hard to imagine me doing this at his age. I felt a bit sorry for him as his group had split up (not set off together). Often the younger ones like to travel together. So I was talking to him for a bit when Mark invite me for dinner so I invited Billy and with Mark was a very nice chap from Cumbria, Cleator Moor to be exact who had just retired from Sellafield. After meal I went to Mass, con celebrated and read the Gospel in Spanish (mas o menos). Priest very friendly and mentioned mum in Eucharistic prayer.. Lots of people went to bed very early but I wasn't very tired so did some Spanish. Very early start for lots of people. I got up at 5.30 and was off by 6.00. Said I would walk with Mark (the Australian) if that helped but, he said, he was OK but thanks for the offer.

Very fresh and beautiful sunrise. Had breakfast on the way and enjoyed a lot of the walk - can feel rucksack but building up stamina. Thought I might write to Martin Sheen who was in 'The Way' and thank him and explain circumstances of my trip. This made me cry. The first time on the Camino but it was OK to cry. Arrived not long after midday and there was a



welcome office at the bridge, so I asked if there was a Parochial Albergue here and there is, and I'm in it. Bought some things for lunch and enjoyed being able to do that then ate lunch whilst waiting for hostel to open at 1.00pm.

Met Puerta Ricans again and a French Canadian girl with a blister and a lad called Joel from Oldham. This is his second time walking from St Jean Pied de Port to Santiago. He did it last July. He works in a factory so had to save up all his holidays. Some American girls who are Catholic, who like priests! Want Sacrament of reconciliation. Have said yes, but asked hospitaleros to check with priest. I am remembering that the hospitaleros are a special breed in lots of ways who volunteer to help for two weeks at a time. Just had a very deep two hour sleep and going to say evening prayer then some icon writing then mass at 7.30pm followed by a meal all together and night prayer. So should be interesting. Two lads here who are injured. Hopefully they will be able to carry on. So things are beginning to grow on the Camino!

Day Five Logrono to Najera 31 kilometres

Big walk again today but safely arrived around 2.15pm this afternoon despite the fact that I overslept this morning as in 6.30am! Yesterday was a great day, a proper Camino day. After evening prayer I did some icon painting which I enjoyed (might not get chance today as I need an egg and it's a bit late. Then met priest, who said it was OK to celebrate Sacrament of reconciliation with some of the pilgrims. Con celebrated mass and a shared meal in the hostel - a great chance to meet other



pilgrims and as ever they are lovely to meet and stereotypes fall apart a bit - hopefully both ways. One of pilgrims asked me to explain Christianity! I think it is still standing! Met two newly qualified doctors, sat next to lad from Oldham who is bilingual (English and Greek) and American and a girl from Denmark. After meal there was a prayer service and stamping passport etc and washing up. I slept very well and forgot my alarm was on silent but all worked well today. Rucksack fine. Had a couple of coffee breaks and a cornetto. Enjoyed speaking some Spanish with Puerto Rican's and saw a few people I know but very quiet today. I think bigger distance means more spread out (or hiding behind bushes when they see me). Arrived in Nareja at 2.15pm when everything is shut including the Tourist Information. A kind man in a bar gave a map and found municipal Gite. Again enjoyed being able to speak in Spanish and said I prefer to. Washed clothes (now drying) and found church but decided to celebrate mass here today as not too late. On way met Polish girl so could help her find the Albergue. Going to celebrate mass with her, American girls and possible Puerto Rican's. Might buy one more walking top, that would actually give me three full sets (using trouser three times) plus



another full set with shorts and T shirt. Decadent I know, but better for washing. So all well and pleasantly tired.

Day Six **Najera to Groñón**

It's 4.50pm and just had a sleep on a mattress in an attic in the Parish Albergue in Groñón. Yesterday celebrated mass with polish girl, American girls and Puerto Rican's. Ricardo made some carbonara and shared it with me before Mass. We sat in the field in the shade for Mass and then I had a sleep. I bought an extra walking top (which I wore today) and some sandals (great purchase). Saw Mark who suggested a very good place to eat. It was very busy but I enjoyed taking the time to read the local newspaper. Then met Martin, from Cumbria and had a couple of drinks and Ricardo joined us. So spoke a bit of Spanish. Talked to one of hospitalero who is from Quebec (not Canadian or as he said 'Quebec is unfortunately in Canada') for quite some time. I told him about carrying my mum's ashes but I'm not planning on telling anyone who will be walking on the way. Managed not to fall off the top bunk, slept pretty well considering 96 beds in dormitory but had a bit of a headache this morning. May be the sun, or half bottle of red wine followed by two large beers - so trying to make sure that I drink lots of water.

Set off at 6.00am and it was a beautiful morning and a beautiful sunrise. Walking through fields of corn. At one time, corn on one side, vineyards on the other and sun rising. Spoke to me of Jesus as the bread of life for us on the journey - it was a beautiful moment. Had breakfast at a cafe and was speaking to





a Japanese lady who had been ill for seven years but was hoping to go back to work after the Camino. Then walked with one of the Irish lads - he walks fast and has long legs so good stretch of pace. He stopped to try and use swimming pool. Then I walked with Martin from Cumbria until we arrived in Santa Domingo de la Calzada and there had a coffee and saw some people I knew, bought some lunch and to Groñón Was quite hot in the end so glad to arrive at much talked about parish Albergue. Famous on way so lot of people staying here. There is mass at 7.00pm then meal and then a blessing. They don't have a stamp so going to get stamp at the bar after. Hopefully going to have a couple of eggs later via one of American girls Monica who hard boil them to eat (hopefully realises I need them fresh. Maria and Monica are walking 40 kilometres tomorrow and have thrown down the challenge for me to do it. I think I will because it would give me a possible rest day or can stay where I am meeting Gavin and just walk 10 kilometres in the afternoon - plus I know what I am like. So about to say evening prayer then go to the bar for a while then ready for Mass. I think there is another priest here on the next mattress from Puerto Rica He didn't understand a word when I

spoke in Spanish but just helped translate for an English speaking lady so 1-1!

Day Seven Groñón - Villafranca Monte de Orca

It's just gone one thirty on the afternoon and I decided that 29/30k was more than enough today! I'm keeping an eye on



how far ahead / behind I am to make sure I am in the right place! So went over to the bar with Martin for a couple of Pacheran's (which I could get to like quite quickly). Chatted with a few people I know and also a student from Madrid - he spoke in English

and I spoke in Spanish. I read the bidding prayers at Mass and met Fr Gabriel a young (28) Puerto Rican priest just finished his studies in Spain. Good man, looks very new! Will keep him in my prayers.

Then we had to process round singing to bring the dinner round and those of us who offered to help were given wigs to wear so I wore a purple wig! What joy! Had a bit of fun with the superlatives that Americans use - awesome! Sat with Martin, Gabriel and Monica and an American family - 18 year old daughter walking with her parents. Then we had evening prayer and the obligatory hugging. So after that we had to sit through a talk on the Camino - was interesting to see that pilgrims used to have a seal as no paper for credentials. Planned early start at 5.30 to begin walking at 6.00 which we did. Set off walking with Gabriel, Monica and Maria but he has Achilles heel so we dropped back. Then I tried to catch others up but then stopped for breakfast. Very hot from just past half past ten and not



much shade so decided I didn't need to walk 42k and wasn't walking with them so staying here in a municipal Albergue which I really like. Met some French woman and felt very comfortable speaking French and then spoke some Italian and remembered more this time. Enjoyed speaking Spanish with Gabriel this morning. A bit a day helps my confidence.

Last night we had to say why we were on the Camino and I said that the first time I walked on the Camino Mum and Dad were alive and this is the first time I am walking since they have both died so I am walking with them. Martin was very moved and moving when he said that he was remembering his mum and dad. So many stories that bring people to the Camino. Going to have a rest now then celebrate Mass here as no Mass in town today then some icon painting and a pilgrim meal in town.'

Day Eight Villa Franca to Cardneula Riopico

It's 5.10pm and I'm sat in a small room by door of the municipal Gite with the cost of five euro. And it's perfect for the job!

Celebrated mass yesterday in courtyard of municipal Gite which



was a cross between a prison yard and a playground. Then said evening prayer and office of readings and sorted a few things and did some icon painting which I enjoyed. Just had a whiff of voltarol

which is a familiar smell on the Camino as is the sight of people doing things with their feet. Had a walk around Villa Franca which took about five minutes, enough to realise that the first bit of the walk today would be uphill (and it was). So very glad I stayed there last night. Found a bar and was too early for

pilgrim meal so had a gin and tonic (which they served in a pint glass). Meal was very good (I had lamb) and they served it with wine. Then I went back and read the newspaper. I really enjoy doing that. Met Fr Gabriel and he said about meeting up for mass today as he was going to same place (reminder to self - on Camino , never take that as read, believe it when you see it).

Had reasonable sleep. American woman behaved as if she was only person in dorm opening blinds and Windows fully, so I shut them later. Woke up and got out of bed for 5.30 to set off



for six. Most beautiful walk so far, the first 12 kilometres which if I'd done it yesterday would have been wishing away. The Church on the

Way today was beautiful . Not many are open which is a shame (the one here tonight is closed). Had breakfast, which I like after a good bit of walking and then another 12 kilometres. Enjoyed ordering things in the shop and when I arrived here and some compliments about my Spanish! Ricardo and daughter going to meet us here as well (but it's the Camino). Anyway, met and had a good chat with a lady who had just retired from a lingerie shop and lived in Normandy. She has been walking from the 1st of May. Have started to give some thought to retreat for Gavin. Also thinking of doing another icon in the way of St Raphael if I can sort the logistics.

Jolly Spanish man just arrived (or may be Italian). Anyway another extraordinary day and all my clothes have been washed. Gabriel, Ricardo and Sabrina carried on to Burgos. Important to be very easy going on the Way which like life is full of hellos and goodbyes and best not to be laboured. Wow this is something!!!



Day Nine

Cardneula to Rabe de las Calzadas

It looks like it's going to be mad Friday on the Camino today. I should have known better when I saw the sign for the Albergue on the way in. There are only three of us staying here with a couple who have been here for along time. I thought it was a parochial Albergue... Anyway such is the Camino and I have all that I need it's just most of it has been suspended in bin bags because of bed bugs! Anyway yesterday was French day. After doing some more icon writing which I hope to do after this today. Then had meal with two French people from Normandy so spent the evening speaking French. Ricardo arrived at Albergue from nowhere but didn't turn up in the bar. After meal I was talking with a man from Denmark who had walked the Camino a few times, always the same route. Interestingly he said that one year it was very hard work and then he realised there was something wrong within him. We talked about the spirit of the way, then he told me that he was blind in one eye and could go blind any day, that there are a number of people on the Way with cancer.

Sad news last night about the death of 'little' Aunty Margaret, one of my mum's best friends. She wanted me to do her funeral but unfortunately I can't, so I am sad about that. I offered the walk for her today and went to Mass in Burgos cathedral - couldn't concelebrate as I just missed the start - only had the idea as I set of at 6.00 this morning. Glad I decided not to stay in Burgos. I remember from previous times on the Camino that the big cities and cathedrals feel a bit much. So in contrast I am sat in the sunshine in a tiny



place 12 kilometres ahead of schedule but definitely not going to do too much each day - I plan on 28 kilometres tomorrow (which is not too much) and that put me in a good position to meet Gavin. I sorted a plan for retreat but, he is with me for less time so I've revised it now. Hopefully get an early night tonight and do some Spanish after dinner. I remember little Aunty Margaret fondly.

Day Ten Rabe de Las Calzadas - Castrojeriz

Sat in comfy armchair in a small open sitting room in private Albergue a couple of kilometres further on to where I was planning to stay. Actually last night turned out really well. I attempted to do some icon painting and the couple put up the big umbrella for me at the table outside so I could work at it there but then it became a social activity so I only really did half an hour before meal at 6.45pm which had cold soup (which I enjoyed) and salad and tortilla. Then we went to a local convent of daughters of charity for evening prayer with them which I enjoyed. I was asked to read some of the prayers and do the blessing in Spanish! Getting a bit more used to public speaking in Spanish. Then met some of the sisters briefly and back to Albergue and read newspaper for a bit then bed. Took a bit to get to sleep as early and slept in the afternoon so might listen to Spanish then - see what happens. Set off today at 6.00 with intention of staying in a disused monastery with no electricity



and cold showers and tomorrow night something similar. So asked if I could charge my phone where I had breakfast. I now know the word for to charge 'Cobrar.' They were very kind. Met an English woman on the Way walking from her home in Southampton - jut retired and on the road for three and a half months. - brilliant!

Arrived at monastery at 11.30 but they didn't open until 2.30pm so decided to walk into town where I found a very nice Albergue. I'm just hoping my washing will come back at some



stage. Had a sleep. Was going to go to Carmelites but decided not enough time so celebrated mass here for little Aunty Margaret. Rang my sister and enjoyed having a chat with her. Little Aunty Margaret had sent me a letter and card there

which only arrived yesterday asking me to do the funeral but not to worry if I was too busy. Bringing back memories of mum putting things in order before she died. Said evening prayer and now going to celebrate mass then some icon writing then pilgrim meal in local bar. All good stuff - man just back, so hopefully my washing will arrive soon!

Day Eleven Castrojeriz to Boadilla del Camino

It's mid afternoon and outside there are lots of people in what is a very busy hostel. I was going to stay at municipal but no sandwiches so came here and it's very busy. Evening meal is at 7.00pm, that could be interesting. Anyway I have a bed and it is a nice place plus Eduardo gave me two eggs and I'm going to



celebrate mass in the church laterals. Arrived here just at the end of mass this morning (I didn't know timings). My washing turned up no problem - sometimes I think I find things to worry about. Celebrated mass then did some more on the icon and went to eat. English lady there and Lucas from Italy. Spoke to Luca as he ate and invited English lady to join me for coffee. She is a university lecturer from Warwick and a Catholic. So chatted for quite some time as I finished the bottle of red wine! Then I read the paper and was chatting with Owen one of the Irish lads who I thought was way ahead. His friend thought she'd try sleeping rough!! I think this is rough enough for me - tomorrow I might treat myself to a single room for twenty two euro in a convent. Think it's important every so often and Gavin here on Thursday. Short walk today so didn't set off until 7.15 and had a late breakfast after 10 / 12 kilometres. I like that. Quite a big hill early on so prayed the stations of the cross as I went up it. I said a few hellos but very happy walking alone - not being anti social just comfortable. Met lady who had walked from her home, again today. So going to do some icon writing now. Then some prayers before celebrating mass.



Day Twelve Boadilla deal Camino to Carrion de los Condes

Well yesterday turned out very well. I did a good couple of hours on the icon then said evening prayer then had a bit of a wander and waited outside church. I thought I would be brave



and if it was just the sacristan and myself I would try to celebrate mass in Spanish. As it turned out he rang the bells, quite a lot of people came and I celebrated mass for the first time in Spanish - it being Sunday mass with a congregation! Took a bit of doing to find the things in the missal but I think it went OK. Then sat with lady from Australia, one from Cheshire



and two from America (California who were committed Catholics). Very enjoyable meal. Then had a drink whilst going to do some reading but ended up speaking to a Spanish girl walking with her father. She speaks four languages so was good fun. Keeping her in my prayers as she is not well and not working at the moment. Lots of stories of people at the crossroads and hoping to find answer on the Camino. Early (ish) start today. Busy on way to begin with then took a lovely diversion route by river. At bar whilst having a coffee Mamma Mia was playing first my favourite 'The Winner Takes It All' then Mum's favourite 'Slipping through my fingers'. Poignant moment. Then bumped into Clare again who works at Warwick university and walked with her and a lady from South Africa and a lady from Galway. Once arrived in town looked for Convent and asked some locals and pleased they understood and here I am in a single room like a small room in hall of

residence (en suite) with dinner, bed and breakfast for twenty eight euro. So having a bit of a luxury today and think it is important to do that. Evening meal is at 7.00 then mass at 8.00 so going to have a good rest then pray and icon paint. Don't feel like exploring the town at the moment, very happy to be restful.

Day Thirteen **Carrion de los Condes to Ledigos**



So warming up to be a another very special day on the Way! Yesterday after a good sleep I said evening prayer and then said some prayers. Then I had evening meal with the English lady and a Spanish man so meal was in Spanish. Then I spoke to Cuban nun for a bit (very friendly) and went to Mass. We were given a star at the end of mass by some jolly nuns. Met lady from Warwick at mass. Then watched some of the motorcycle diaries. Think I'd like to read that in Spanish at some stage. Good sleep but a few strange dreams including that mum was still alive. I guess that will happen. Breakfast at convent, given two eggs, then set off at 6.30am. Met lady from Australia called Siobhan and shared my maps with her (spare ones). Had a good chat then walk. Then walked with Grace from Hong Kong who was lovely and then for the last hour with an Italian man so spent last hour speaking Italian. Arrived first here. I like the place but not the Raven. Decided to book hostels when with Dom as people say it's busy for last 100 kilometres done, two will do rest later. Feel not as tired today. Will make sure that I have a rest with a single room every so often. So was going to put washing on line but hadn't washed so put it on and now it's taking a very long time! Met

two French men, one, who is a doctor and loves theology, especially scripture. Just been talking for ages to them in French. Local priest normally here everyday at 4.00pm so will say hello to him. So busy day so far but enjoying it. Hopefully will get chance to do some on icon, might just rest for an hour.

Day Fourteen Ledigos - Sahagun Diaconate Anniversary

So here I am in a monastery garden or rather I would be but its too cold to sit outside just at the moment. It's been raining today and did last night. Funny how quickly you get used to and expect good weather all the time. Anyway yesterday my washing finally finished I think I shouldn't have pressed that button again but they got a good wash. Did some on the icon yesterday and then went to see if priest was in the bar but he wasn't so put washing out and spent some time learning Spanish. Treated myself to a Gin and Tonic whilst learning more words then had dinner with a Spanish man and a Mexican man so a couple of hours conversation in Spanish which I enjoyed. Then read a bit and wen to bed. Didn't sleep very well as in awake for an hour so listened to some music. Ended up crying listening to 'Let me go now' - all part of things, I know, but shows how important this is and there are going to be more challenging times. Set off around 6.30am and wore my fleece for the first time. Last night sent an email to Dom asking him to bring a few things and most importantly to take mum's ashes home. Not an easy decision but I think that is best or may be even harder do in September and all being well I will have done what I promised by taking them to Santiago. Short walk today



only 17k as need to be in right place to meet Gavin, Salford student who is going to be ordained a deacon in a few weeks, who arrives tomorrow at 2.00pm. So had arrived by 10.30, found a religious house (thought I'd try it) and then found main square to have a coffee. Chatted for half an hour in Italian with Italian lady who lives on the Via Francigena (*Ancient pilgrimage route running from France to Rome and Apulia*) Then met Australian lady who lives in Switzerland. Eight euro for a bunk bed in room with two bunk beds with a bathroom (they had single rooms but saving that for a treat again sometime after Gavin before Dom arrives). Today is the half way point which is marked by two stone statues either side of the Way. Definitely a milestone so special for anniversary of ordination. Tried to find mass in town but isn't one, so had some lunch (in a bar to avoid rain) and then came back and celebrated mass in the room and had a good two hours sleep. I was just getting used to



the idea that I might have room to myself when two American ladies arrived. And I knew it was right to give up the bottom bunk (diaconate celebration after all). Anyway they seem really nice and had a chat with them. The lady came

in asking if they understood Spanish then said 'you speak a little' I admit my pride was dented, but onward and upward! So writing this then going to say Evening Prayer, ring Andrew then, send some pictures to website and do some icon writing before Benediction at 7.00pm and evening meal at 7.30pm. So who

knows! Bit of time to fill in the morning but good to have nothing to do rather than too much!!!

Day Fifteen Sahagun to Hermanillos

How the other half live! Tonight I am staying in a hotel! With a bath! Gavin had booked single rooms but I did a downgrade to a triple room which is still very posh. His train is delayed so I have walked here this morning after a lie in until 6.45 am and then morning prayer and mass in the monastery. Much better than being stuck in Sahagun. So short walk today and it was cold - I needed my fleece all the time and tomorrow I think it's going to rain. So quite a contrast but all well. Had a good long chat with Andrew on the phone which was great and then more on the icon (and hope more this afternoon after a bath!!) Then went to Evening Prayer and pilgrim blessing in the church. Evening meal to begin with was with two American ladies but then another group joined and ended up a great evening. I ordered two extra bottles of wine to celebrate my diaconate. And today the American couple and friend James who reminds me of Chicken Joe are staying in the same place. And Mark from Australia may join us (I've sent a text). But you never know with the Camino but be good for Gavin to meet people. And hopefully they are going to open up the church for Mass this evening. So another very special 24 hours on the Camino. Must not take for granted!! **AMDG**



Day Sixteen Hermanillos

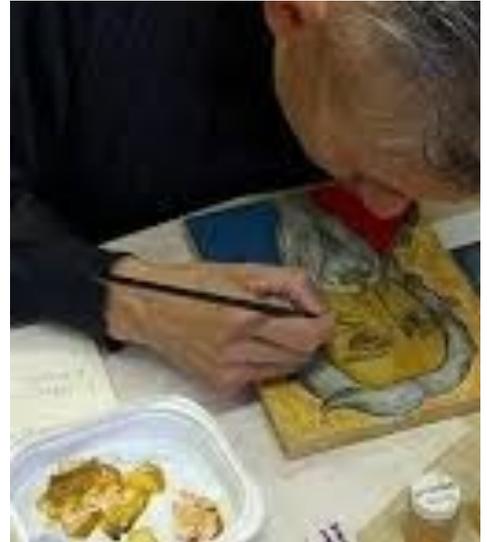
So yesterday I had a very long and enjoyable bath. Then a sleep and more on the icon - it is starting to come to life now which is very special. Went with Americans to buy a sandwich and then Gavin arrived. Said evening prayer together then went to



celebrate mass in small chapel in the town. Again they rang the bells! So half in English and half in

Spanish and James (Chicken Joe) served the mass. Then

had a meal and Mark joined us as well. Set off this morning and made sure we took a photo of Gavin. Trying to remember excitement of first steps and mark that for him - in fact trying to do that generally for him as he moves towards diaconate. Walked first hour in



silence then chatted together. Long straight walk along a Roman road today and nowhere for breakfast until 10.00am. Still we did very well and we arrived here just before midday. Bob, of Fr Bob and Halloween Fame here and Mark and a few others. Sad news - I saw Teresa from Denmark and one of her group is in hospital. I think it is special to see people again and reminder that it will not be the case walking the Camino deal Norte and it is a quiet on road to Lourdes but I think it's the right thing to do but, plan B would be Seville to Santiago, but, I think that should be for another year. Staying in nice but simple Albergue five euro. Had lunch then a couple of drinks so sleep now, dinner later then Mass. So hope Gavin is enjoying his first day on Camino. It's day sixteen already!!

Day Seventeen to Leon

It has just gone midday and we have arrived in Leon and staying at the Benedictine monastery. We were one of the first to arrive and then Mark and Martin arrived and then Andrea the lad from Spain. This morning we walked in silence for the first hour then had breakfast and then talked about the three promises we make at diaconate. Good opportunity for me to reflect as much as for Gavin. I hope that the discussion that we had this morning was of use to him. Tomorrow we are going to talk about preaching and the day after about baptisms, weddings and funerals. And he also want to talk about Our Lady so will make sure that we do that as well. So now in the Albergue and had a shower. Mass is at 1.00pm as it is Saturday and going to meet the nuns. Then a long lunch and look around Leon so hopefully that all fits well. Yesterday evening went out with Gavin, Mark, Martin, Bob and Dan for a meal which was very enjoyable and then went to Mass. The priest was very welcoming and invited Gavin to serve the mass. Afterwards met Ricardo, Sabrina and Andreas so went for drink with them and had a good long chat with Ricardo in Spanish. Walking today not very far 18 kilometres but good to be in Leon with a place to stay and time to investigate the cathedral and find out information for German pilgrims. All good stuff thanks be to God.



Day Eighteen Leon - Hospital de Orbigo

So yesterday was a busy day in Leon and in complete contrast I am now sat in a beautiful, quiet garden in a parochial Albergue 33 kilometres away. Done more today so Gavin can make 10.50 bus at Astorgia tomorrow. Concelebrated mass yesterday and there was a South Korean priest walking the Camino with his niece. Gavin served on. Helped give blessings at the end. Then walked in to Leon with Mark, Martin and Gavin and had a long lunch! Then visited the cathedral which was stunning and the Tourist Information and found out info for the German pilgrims arriving at the end of July. Had a sleep then went to Evening Prayer with the Benedictine nuns then we met up again with Mark and Martin and had a great evening. Which was particularly good as sadly Mark got a phone call today to say that his wife had had two strokes and so he has to return to Australia. I rang him before and he is waiting for train to Santiago then flight to Paris then home. A hard journey to make and you could hear in his voice so keeping him in my prayers. Also keeping Luke in my prayers as he is meeting bishop today. On the walk today we took the theme of Our Lady and then preaching and then as we walked further we also talked about Baptism, Wedding and Funerals. think Gavin is finding it helpful. It's the first time I've given a retreat. Tomorrow I've said it is chance to ask any questions or revisit anything we have already talked about. I am celebrating Mass tonight at 5.00pm then something to eat and 9.00pm sharing and blessing. So ready for a rest now but a good, long walk today and a lovely place now we've arrived.



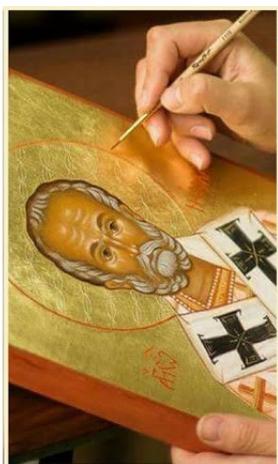
Day nineteen

Hospital de Orbigo - Astorgia



Today marks the longest continual number of days that I have walked on the Camino but there's still plenty more to go hopefully. I really liked the place that we stayed at last night and the hospitaliers and the priest were very friendly. I celebrated mass at 5.00pm and a few of the volunteers came along and some pilgrims. In the end I talked about the international language of the cross, sacrifice and love. God's message is simple, often we make it over complicated. After Mass said evening prayer then had a drink with Martin (it is the Camino after all) and then Gavin and I had dinner and a good chat. Then prayer at 9.00pm. One of girls did a really good job translating but then found it a bit much so I had to do some Spanish - English! Afterwards I told the priest that I was carrying my mum's ashes and we had a good chat and then I chatted with a French man and then bed.

Today we walked approximately seventeen kilometres to make sure we were in good time for Gavin to get the bus to Santiago. Lovely walk with the first hour the moon was very clear in front of us, then more along the road (there was an alternative but wanted to make sure we were in good time). We made it to the Cathedral and then to the bus station so time for a coffee and Martin joined us. Keeping Mark in my prayers. Helen has offered to guild icon and scribe it out for me which is great. I think I will give St Raphael to Mark as he couldn't finish the Camino. So all washing done, had a really good two hour sleep



and now on patron writing this then going to say evening prayer then go out with Ricardo et al before mass at 8.00pm. Tomorrow I am planning on walking extra five kilometres to shorten the day after. So retreat safely done



AMDG and feeling relaxed after that and starting to feel moving into different stage of being on the Camino. Every day at the moment feels like an adventure.

Day Twenty Astorga to Foncebadon

Sat outside the parochial Albergue quite high up mountain at midday (well 12.20 to be precise) waiting for it to open at 13.30 but here are only eighteen beds so worth a wait as it is a Donativo and not much more around and should be a good experience. So all sat here and waiting and Andreas has gone on a beer run. Well it is the Camino after all. So yesterday a typical arrangement, one minute too many people then split up a service was too slow. So had a drink and then evening meal and then Mass at 8.00pm Rosary was in full flow and then very little time before start of mass so I stayed in the congregation. Novena to Our Lady or Perpetual Succour. Rest. Used PowerPoint for homily (helpful for us with key words) but not convinced I'd want to preach like that. Read the newspaper then went to bed and had a good sleep. Dreamt about mum but that was OK. 5.30 am start today, breakfast at 6.00 then walked with Martin. Enjoyed the walking and the talking and arrived just before midday. It was a reasonable climb but then very near the top for tomorrow. There is a famous cross where people put a stone they bring (which I forgot) but I will put the necklace of Mum's



star there I think. Sometimes good to reflect on why I am walking the Camino especially this year, then everything else falls into correct place.

Day Twenty One Foncebadon to Ponferada



The stay in the Albergue parrochial was very enjoyable last night. After writing my diary I spoke for a good long time with one of the pilgrims in Spanish which gave me confidence, then asked about celebrating mass so made arrangement to celebrate mass at 5.00pm. Then had a rest (18 beds bunk beds in a room that would normally have less). So cosy but good experience. Spoke to Bob on phone which was good to touch base. A lot of people came to mass. Then went for a drink with Martin and meal at 7 o'clock. Sat with Spanish speakers so that gave me chance too practice. Then to the Cafe Bar for a bit. Met Eduardo from Costa Rica before dinner and had a good chat with him in Spanish before mass (even though he spoke very good English). Then an early night. We were told 6.00 am start so I thought that I'd overslept then turned out everyone got up at 5.30! Walked to iron cross today where people put



stones that they have carried. I had forgot to bring a stone but decided I would put my mum's necklace there (not the star itself - that will go with her ashes into grandma and grandad's grave). So it was a funny feeling, letting go of something but important to do. The walk today was very different from the point of view of countryside - very green and up in the mountains. Some ascent then a lot of descent with a lot of technical walking and a hot day again today. So a good full morning walk beginning at 6.15am and arriving just around midday. Staying in hostel with a chapel. Nicely ready for rest now - three weeks today on the Camino!

Day Twenty Two

Ponferada to Trabadelo



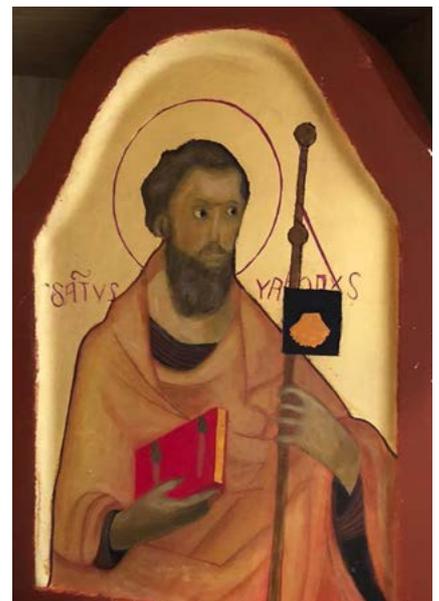
Today has been the longest day's walking so far and I can feel it in my legs. Just short of 40 kilometres covered which is much further than I would normally do and should make tomorrow easier. Ah the Camino! Could get busy easier. Yesterday I did a lot more on the icon and feel that soon I will be finished. Was complemented by an Italian art restorer. Then had a rest for about an hour then went for a meal with Martin . Celebrated Mass for feast of SS Fisher More with Korean priest who is walking with his niece, for mostly English speaking and two Italians. Grandfather and grandson from America there and thee ladies from Southport who are doing the Camino in stages and return home today and hope to complete next year. Then had a couple of beers in local bar, rang my sister, spoke to my nephews and then went to bed. This morning the Korean priest lost his phone. We are hoping that it wasn't stolen. Set off before 6.00 this morning and at a



good pace. Met a Spanish lad called Raul. It was his first day and he seemed a bit nervous about it all. I tried to reassure him. I hope that he had a good first day. We did an extra 9 kilometres because tomorrow is one of the steepest climbs on the Way and it comes at the end of the day. So we stopped for breakfast and Calippo ice cream break at 11.30am and arrived at 1.30pm. Had lunch, then shower then a very deep sleep for two hours and now doing this, then evening prayer and then the frame on the icon. Going to celebrate mass at 6.30 here (not much in town) and then have evening meal and bed. Today in England it's the referendum!

Day Twenty Three Trabadelo to O Cebreiro

It's just gone 11.00am and safely arrived at the top of the mountain! Albergue doesn't open until one but waiting here as pretty sure this will fill up - there are notices saying people with back up vehicles and who are starting here have to wait until others come in. So time to write my journal, say some prayers and do some reading - and just be still for a bit! Worked some more on the icon which has now really come to life and finished the border. Sent a picture to Helen, my icon teacher, who is really pleased with it.



So now I am going to pray with it and when Dom arrives hopefully I will have the special red paint to name the icon before giving it to him. I don't know yet if best to give it to him on the Way or in Santiago. Same principle with possible future Camino. I'll tell God my plans and

let Him decide. Perhaps that is a lesson for me to learn especially this year. So very happy the icon is well on the way and placed it on the table a we celebrated mass. It was a lovely celebration with just the two of us. Martin had become my walking partner and I'm happy with that. So he's booked in same places when Dom arrives and that should be good for Dom as well. Had a meal where we are staying - only one person, so she was very busy but all went well. Then early night and a very deep sleep - took full advantage of the bed and had a very deep sleep and woke at 6.00, not before the alarm. People starting to arrive now so good idea to have arrived. People starting to put rucksacks outside the door so just making sure we keep in position. Ah the Camino! I think it will start to get busy so now could be a few fun



and games! First twelve kilometres of walk today slightly uphill then cake for breakfast as someone had the last Neopoltana do Ciocolada (Pain au Chocolate). The last 7 kilometres were definitely uphill, particularly the first part. Not as difficult as a lot of

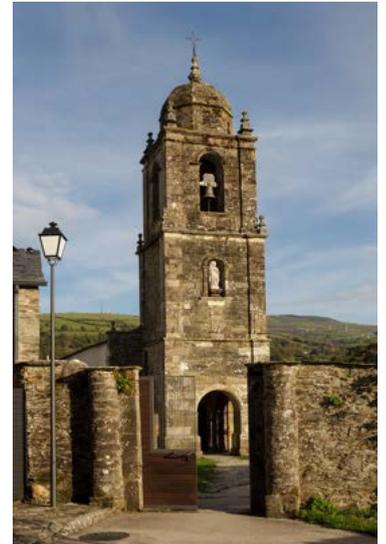
walks that I have done in the Lake District but enough with full rucksack. It wasn't too hot which helped. So safely arrived and will see what happens as the day unfolds. Tomorrow not too far then two shorter days walking to make sure I'm in the right place to meet Dom which is now only a few days away!

Day Twenty Four

O Cebreiro to Triacastela



Safely down the mountain and waiting outside the Albergue to open at 1.00pm which gives me chance to write up my diary for the day. So yesterday was another good day on the Way. Had a good chat with a group of Italian women - Aunty and two nieces and an Italian man who set off somewhere near Lourdes on the 18th of May. And then some of the Spanish people I know including Eduardo turned up so enjoyed speaking to them too. Room full of bunk beds and seems that in Galicia they have all been built to a similar plan (the municipal ones that is). So got unpacked, had a shower and then a full lunch! Followed by a sleep. Had a good chat to Andrew on the phone and then went to the Church which was a very prayerful church and lit a candle for mum and dad there. There was the story of a miracle with Eucharist taking place there. The church itself was very prayerful and I read the passage in the Gospel according to John of the Last Supper. And Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. Then waited for priest to ask to concelebrate mass. The church was run by the Franciscans. The other Franciscan was hearing confessions and I thought it would be a god idea to go but thought I would ask the Korean priest (Thin Ho) who was also concelebrating. So after mass and a discussion with the Franciscans about Brexit (52/48) voting to leave Europe which I was surprised about, I



went to confession. I thought of the wrong ways that I look at people, with envy, lust, jealousy, pity, less important, curiosity. It struck me how much that contrasts with the way that Jesus looks at us with love. Found that a helpful reflection and put a bigger picture on things as well. Then had meal with Martin, the Korean priest and his niece *Seewon* (Jiwon). He has had his phone and wallet stolen. I've given him my email address to say, anytime he needs help because I want to try and help them on the Way . So then to bed after speaking with American grandad who I'm hopefully meeting up with today as I think that he wants a chat. Today 6.00m up for 6.30m start. People not getting up quite as early now! Cold but very pleasant walk pretty much in the clouds all the way so not much of a view but very enjoyable. And not too long or difficult. Just been on the phone to Dominic to check that he is all sorted for Monday and sounds well at the moment there. So now it's midday so will pray the Angelus then get a sandwich to eat whilst waiting for Albergue to open.

Day Twenty Five Triacastela to Samos

Half day walking today so a bit of a day off to make sure I'm in the right place to meet Dom tomorrow but not too early. So the plan was a lie in until 7.00 but the idea of saloon type doors on dormitories and toilet meant that from 5.30am most were awake. But took the chance for some quiet meditation time. Yesterday sorted room, two bunk beds in it, then had a shower and a rest. Then did some Spanish after speaking a bit with a chap from Italy who had walked from Lourdes. He said it was very quiet on that part and he liked it. I definitely think it is the



way to go over the next two months and if I arrive early help pilgrims for a few days there. So then I went to the bar and had a coffee and a Calippo and read the newspaper for an hour which I really enjoyed. Met a couple of people I'd met before who were asking me about Brexit! Then walked to church. Beautiful views. Found myself listening to a Matt Maher song, thinking of mum and looking at the pictures. Cried a bit. Thought I liked the picture when we took a selfie - I think mum would like that one better, rather than the one the day before she died.

Went into church and a man busy with flowers and stamping credentials. Didn't look up when I asked about Mass. So a bit put out but later realised he was the priest and had eleven parishes. He liked it when I offered to help set up for Mass and in the end was very friendly. A reminder for me in the parish when people ask about mass times. Then met (Thin [Ho](#)). He con celebrated. Then we went for a meal with Bill, American granddad, and his grandson, Brendan. Bill wanted to talk theology so I hope I helped and I tried some Octopus! Then a couple of drinks with Martin in the bar as watched scenes from London and Scotland. Walk today was very peaceful and just a couple of hours. Last night I dreamt about mum. Now arrived and staying in a very nice double room close to monastery. There is mass at midday so going for a shower now.

Day Twenty Six Samos to Sarria

Luxury today In a hotel (hostel tomorrow). Triple room for forty euro so a treat. To make sure Dom has a place when he arrives





later on. It's just gone 2.00pm and I've taken full advantage of the shower gels etc and got my haircut and bought some toiletries and drew some more cash out. Mass yesterday was a bit unusual in that it was in a huge Benedictine Abbey but only three monks at Mass and congregation. But a good experience. Then had some lunch and a rest followed by tour of the monastery cloisters. Can't say I got much of the Spanish as the monk talked very fast but anyway was quite something to see - reminded me of seminary as well. Then Martin not feeling so good (I think he's starting to get tired now and ready for home - it's a long time away from family). So I had a Calippo and read a magazine about the Heralds of the Gospel who have a particular devotion to Our Lady which I'm all for remembering her last words in the Gospel John 2 'Do what he tells you to do!' As I was having something to eat, a girl from Scotland who was walking with her guitar and a lad from Croatia who was walking with his guitar played some music. Then Andreas and Ricardo turned up. Ricardo looked very tired. When Martin went to bed early I went and sat with them. Andreas wanted a photo with me and thanked me for the masses. He was confirmed just a month ago. He's steaming on ahead now to finish Friday and meet his family. I think we will see Ricardo again. Talked to him about finding work when he goes back to Puerto Rico. Then enjoyed reading the newspaper, interesting European perspective on Brexit. Had a good sleep then up at 6.00 and off for 6.30 only 13 kilometres today back to normal distances tomorrow. Arrived and found

hotel and allowed to leave rucksack. Walked in to town with Martin then back to Tourist Information for map to find out where is bus station. Found that, had haircut, getting washing done and had something to eat. So rest now, then mass at 5.50 pm here and dinner before hopefully meeting Dom at the bus station later.

Day Twenty Seven Sarria to Portomarin

New shoes today! But apart from a bit of rubbing the first 23 kilometres in them has gone well. And more importantly Dom's first full day on the Camino and he has done very well. It's 2.15pm and just had lunch with



Martin and Dom by side of Albergue with beautiful views of lake, like being in the Lake District. Celebrated mass on my own in Spanish yesterday then went for a drink with Martin and met Ricardo. Then as we were having something to eat met with two American ladies who I shared a room with on day of



diaconate anniversary. Then went to meet Dom at bus station. Bus arrived whilst I was having a coffee! Sorted stuff out then a couple of beers and bed. 5.45 up for

6.30 start. Took photos with Dom and began walking. A misty, damp day but now the sun is out and it's beautiful. Twenty three kilometres walk today so back to normal distance. Dom did well and they are getting to know each other. I'm going to



have a sleep now then hopefully finish St James icon then evening meal then mass is at 8.00 pm. Now less than 100 kilometres from Santiago.

Day twenty Eight (Feast of SS Peter and Paul, 29th June) Portomarin to Palas de Rei

Sat at a small desk in a very nice Albergue with just two sets of bunk beds in the room. the upper bunk my brother always had the lower bunk when we were growing up so thought I should tell everyone!! Actually it's fine as there are steps and a great rail! After a rest yesterday. 'Finished' the icon of St James as in halo and naming the icon.



Dom asked who it was for. I didn't tell him as I want to give it to him as a surprise on Saturday in the Cathedral after mass. Then said evening prayer and office of readings in front of icon, read a Pilgrim Newspaper that had 'Pilgrim of the Month' style news but I wasn't in it! Then evening meal with Dom and Martin in the square. Saw a few people I've met before but now more spread out no not



at parochial albergues to meet people the same. All being well from Santiago too Irun I will stay in Donativos where I can. There was a funeral at the church so in the end there wasn't mass. A Spanish priest said some prayers and gave a blessing. I said hello to him afterwards. Then we had a drink and went to

bed. I dreamt Andrew was dressed up as a banana in a fruit shop and it's still only the first month! I'm dreaming more at the moment which I think is helping. 6.00am for 6.30am out (last night I watched more destinies) and was a lovely all - some uphill but not too long (and not much more between here and Santiago). I think we've less than 70 kilometres now which is hard to imagine really. Looked last night at photo of setting off in 2012, 2013, and 2014. So the next few days could be strange in lots of different ways but important to concentrate on and make most of each day. Arriving at Santiago is an important part of the journey but there is so much more to it than that, some of which has already happened, other things still to come, and much I won't realise until sooner or later after I get back. All I know is that this is extraordinary and without a particular reason I'm aware I have a real sense of trusting that God gives us what we need!

Day Twenty Nine Palas de Rei to Arzua

It's just gone 1.30pm and sat on a very comfy settee in corridor by the bar in the Ultraea Albergue which is very nice and I'm sure the big family group with lots of children will add to the ambience! But that is for another day. So yesterday we eventually (well all of ten minutes looking) found a good spot to have full lunch and then a sleep followed by some light speed Spanish, evening prayer and time in church before mass at 7.00pm. Was just starting to worry that I wasn't getting enough practice with Spanish but in the end yesterday was a good day. Two other priests on the Camino plus retired priest from the parish con celebrated. So said a few hellos.. Then afterwards



one of the priests with his confirmation group was staying in the same Albergue so invited him over for a drink. Felipe is his name. Very nice chap and had a good chat and he practiced his



English and we practiced our Spanish. Then a lad who is student in Madrid joined us and it was an enjoyable evening. Then I read the small book I'd been give by priest in church with writing of the Founder of Opus Dei when he was on the Camino, some more light speed Spanish and an episode of Destinos. So later to bed but a good dose of Spanish all round.

Today was at least twenty eight kilometres and we set off at 6.30am arriving here at 12.30 so could have been longer. But again a beautiful walk. Definitely a sense of getting busier on the Way but we are now less than 40 kilometres away so even if it does get hectic from now on fair enough. If I've done my calculations correctly this is where I need to walk to back before I head off on the Camino del Norte. But that is for another day and trying to concentrate on each moment of each day. Even if, hopefully, and most of all depending on God's will, there are other times I have the privilege to be close to Santiago they will not be very often so trying not to rush ahead in any way **AMDG**.

Sandwich has just arrived!

Day Thirty Arzua - Five kilometres from Santiago

Yes exactly! We are now less than five kilometres from Santiago. We walked further than planned as we missed the



town where we were planning to stay. Not sure how that happened. But we decided to walk the extra 15 kilometres to here to municipal Albergue that is close to Santiago and people stay in so they can walk early to Santiago the next day. So a long walk and it was 1.45pm when we arrived but sets up well for tomorrow. Yesterday after lunch it was a bit noisy with excited children but by time washing sorted they went out and there was some quiet time. Dom and I had walked in to town to find out time of mass which was at 7.00pm. So went to Mass - Indian priest who had been there two years and preferred to speak English. I was going to read Gospel when Felipe arrived and I did want to do it but he was very supportive. I said



'pescados' instead of pecados so Jesus told the paralytic that his fish were forgiven but apart from that it went OK. Then we had a drink with Felipe and student from Madrid and Martin then went for something to eat.

Watched some light speed

Spanish and Destinos then had a good sleep. So 6.00am for 6.30am start.

Just been for a late lunch and a walk to the spot where you can see the towers of the Cathedral and Santiago for the first time! Very special moment!! So a good walk today and I'm pleasantly surprised that up to the last five kilometres most of it is through woods - for some reason I imagined it would be all road walking but it's not (the last five days I mean). So here I am in the Albergue about to have a rest before celebrating

mass at 7.00pm here in the Albergue. I have rearranged things so that Mum's ashes and the icon are in bag in rucksack so that they can be taken in to the Cathedral for mass tomorrow.



So after approximately 1,600 kilometres and sixty seven days walking it's down to this, after starting in 2012 and all that has happened . So all sorts of feelings are going through my head and my heart. This is a very special time that I want to give it totally to God. **AMDG!**

It's now 10.45pm and it feels like Christmas Eve!