



Center for Spiritual Development

Daily Reflections

Image by Christine Sponchia

PILGRIM'S DISPATCH: CONSTANT STAR

By Julie Mussché

A Reading from the Book of Isaiah

*"When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you..."*

ISAIAH 43:2

Reflection

Toward the latter part of the river journey, the rains had had a marked impact on the waterway. So much so that our vessel could not pass under a bridge. All of this impacted our arrival at a lock we needed to enter at a particular time. The captain made several attempts but to no avail, and we ended up having to do a U-turn and port at a small village until the river lowered. This would be done through the magic of dams and locks, but because of the relentless rain, not until later that evening. It was thanks to the ingenious system of dams and

locks that we could leisurely travel up and down the Douro.

We learned from a short black-and-white film that, prior to construction of the flood control and hydroelectric system, which took several decades to complete, travel on the river could be perilous in some locations. Despite the danger, it was the main form of transportation east and west and for distributing Port wine to urban consumers throughout the European market. Rabelos, wooden long boats, were used to move the casks of wine from the interior to Porto and, while sturdy and fitting for their purpose, they were subject to the whims of the river. Accordingly, there were shrines to Our Lady along stoppage points where it was typical for the river men to pray for Mary's intercession for safe passage.

This speaks to the significance of the Blessed Mother in the day-to-day lives of the Portuguese people. An observation: along the way, as our tour guides introduced us to shrines or places commemorating Mary, they spoke with a certain tenderness. This circuitous tale brings us to our last stop on the pilgrim's journey, Lamego.

One of the routes along the Camino starts in Lamego, the Route of Torres. No doubt one of the reasons for being a starting point is that the pilgrimage site, the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Remedies, is there -- a national pilgrimage location where devotees ascend the stairs up Mount St. Stephen (Monte de Santo Estêvão), sometimes on their knees, up to the Sanctuary.

On the day of our visit, it was raining and, although we had planned at least to come down the staircase, we were unable to do so. However, that did not detract from the sacred quality of the site and moment. The area dedicated to Our Lady of Remedies is certainly fitting: Baroque in style, ornately designed and inspired. Intercessory prayers to Our Lady of Remedies are for healing, for general aid and help, and for freedom from enslavement in its many forms. A pilgrim's journey can be a bit like a river, flowing yet unpredictable, full of surprise and wonder around each corner.



Our Lady of Remedies, Lamego, Portugal
Photo by Julie Mussché

For Pondering

Consider a time where things did not go quite as planned.

- Where was the invitation to flexibility?

- How were you able to encounter the Divine in that moment?

For Prayer

Mary, Our Lady of Good Remedy, guide me as I search for help in my daily life. Help me to turn to you when I most need help.

Amen.

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