AN INVITATION TO “WALK” WITH FR PADDY

You are invited to walk in prayer with him and allow him to carry your prayers to the ancient shrine of the Black Madonna of the Benedictine monastery of Montserrat, Spain.

In September 2013 a group of pilgrims will walk the 640 km pilgrim route taken by Íñigo López de Loyola (who later became Saint Ignatius of Loyola) in 1522 from his home in Spain’s Basque country to Montserrat and Manresa.

The “Camino Ignaciano,” or the “Ignatian way” begins at the birthplace of Ignatius Loyola in Spain’s Basque country, in a village near the small town of Azpeitia. From there, the route proceeds through picturesque mountains, deserts, and plains, before ending in the town of Manresa near Barcelona.

Ignatius rested in this town for some months after his journey from Loyola. Manresa was a place of profound spiritual enlightenment for him. Here he composed his spiritual masterpiece, the Spiritual Exercises.

Pilgrims will walk virtually the same route that Ignatius did, pass through many towns that he did, pray at churches where he did, and marvel at the same natural wonders that he saw.

Pilgrims will be on a 28-day outer journey and an inner journey. The outer journey will be well marked. The inner journey less so. For some it will be about forgiveness or reconciliation, for others a new direction or course in life, a confirmation of a major life choice, or a renewed or rediscovered sense of personal identity.

Each day pilgrims will have the opportunity for daily Mass, either said by the guide, Fr Michael Smith SJ, or we will attend a Eucharist in one of the local parishes. There will also be opportunities for prayer, personal reflection, spiritual conversation and sharing in small groups.

(In the pilgrimage group with Fr Paddy are Fr John Fitzgerald (Warrnambool), Fr Joe Taylor (Shepparton), and Vin & Sandra Dillon (Vin retired recently as assistant to Bishop Peter Connors.)
Fr Paddy invites parishioners and others:

“I wish to invite parishioners and others to join me in Spirit praying this inner journey. I seek the grace of walking more closely in the footsteps of Jesus in the wholehearted manner that captured St Ignatius. He founded the Jesuits who came to be known as the Company of Jesus: in walking this Ignatian journey I seek to be a closer companion of Jesus, praying the prayer of Ignatius: “Lord, grant that I may see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly.”

There is an ancient tradition that one person from a village would walk as a pilgrim to a sacred place “carrying the sins” of the village in order to be freed from the burden and consequences of sin and selfishness. The “sins” of the village represent those many things that weigh us down, grieve our hearts, wound our spirits, hold us captive, or steal our freedom. Though sometimes yes, they are not necessarily things we have done wrong but wrong that has been done to us, or sadness or grief that has visited us, or failures that have beset us, or maybe addictions that control us.

I have been moved to “carry the sins” of my church whereby numerous innocents have been wounded by sexual abuse, and numerous others have lost faith given such crimes were allowed to happen and even covered up. Due to circumstances I have been destined to hear many such stories and walk with many such families and feel deep within me the pain of such sin. Bearing this cross, I now desire to dedicate my pilgrimage to be a prayer for healing and wholeness for those longing for such.

I also desire to pray with and carry the prayers of parishioners with special intentions or “sins” to be freed from, by ritually carrying written prayers/desires to the ancient sanctuary of the Madonna of Montserrat.

Thus I invite you to write your heartfelt prayer/desire and present it to me that I may carry it to be deposited at the shrine, while we together pray each day of the pilgrimage for the grace being asked. I invite each “companion” to pray with me each day one of the following prayers of St Ignatius:

“Lord, grant that I may see you more clearly, love you more dearly, follow you more nearly.

or

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me.”

Some may wish to share the detail of their prayer with me, others may prefer to pass it on in a sealed envelope; for those so desiring, there will be an opportunity to do this in a prayer ritual/commissioning to be held in the St Mary’s Parish side chapel on Thursday evening, August 29, 7pm.”