From the Editor and Table of Contents

Patrick Fitzpatrick
Getting from Here to There

“Safe Journey” — we say it at airports, when someone is setting out by car for a distant destination, when we say goodbye to weekend visitors. It’s a wish and a prayer behind which lies the unspoken insight — there’s always something of the unknown about a journey.

For many people the journey of life lasts a long time, for others it is cut short — they meet an early death. Long or short, it is by turn predictable and surprising, alone and with others, sometimes taking us where we would rather not go, teaching us many things along the way. We get lost and find our way again, we walk straight roads with far reaching views, we trek winding paths wondering what lies beyond the next bend in the road.

Some people travel all over the world in the course of a lifetime. Others never leave home. Going on a long journey does not of itself result in “coming a long way”. A journey with little geography may well contain much history.

Kate Marshall Flaherty introduces our 2007 Calendar as she voices the thoughts of one of the Magi: “Why is it I on this road?” The Calendar itself is bracketed by January’s Journey of the Magi and December’s Northern Nativity. T.S. Eliot’s Magi recall that theirs was a cold coming in the dead of winter. William Kurelek invites us to reflect on Christmas Then and Now, Christmas There and Here: “If it happened here, as it happened there … If it happened now, as it happened then …”

Sometimes we wonder where we are. We feel lost without any signposts. The Inuit Inuksuk is a welcoming reminder that in the vast, seemingly empty north others have gone before us and survived. We’re on the right path: “Be not afraid. I go before you always. Come, follow me.”

For a young girl setting out with determination, we pray that God may be in her dreams and in her choosing, in her steps and in her lifelong journey.

Pilgrims in Jerusalem walk the Way of the Cross together: “Let no one walk alone. The journey makes us one.” No one should carry the cross alone.

A young girl walking hand in hand with her mother, gazes back at us and prays that she may go forward with her feet on the ground and her hand in God’s hand, the God of her journey.

Each of us is a wayfarer — and a road maker. Our cover, reproduced inside, reminds us of the words of poet Antonio Machado: “Traveller, your footprints are the road, there is no other; traveller, there is no road, you make the road by walking it.”

Not every journey is an easy one, but with the aid of a bicycle and a crutch, the man with one leg reassures us that we also weave into our steps so lame the healing and helping of God’s name.

A teenager takes time out. Life gets hectic and confusing, but Jesus encourages her, “Come to me all you who are weary … I will give you rest.”

In the Judean desert tourists pause for photo-ops. Pilgrims, on the other hand, raise their hands and voices in prayer and praise. The difference? “Tourists pass quickly through places, but places pass slowly through pilgrims, leaving them forever changed.”

Fog descends. There is limited visibility. The way ahead is far from clear. “I have no idea where I am going, I do not see the road ahead of me, I cannot know for certain where it will end.”

Ethiopian refugees remind us that many people’s journeys are indeed aimless: “We walked from nowhere to nowhere and then some.”

Finally, as we turn to the back cover of the 2007 Calendar, Robert Frost looks ahead: “… I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep, And miles to go before I sleep.”

Through the twists and turns, the rough and the smooth, joined by fellow travellers or all alone, we have the conviction that the God of our journey travels with us. May that God be in our steps and make our journey safe.

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