



## To the End of The Earth - Pilgrimage to the land of St James 14 -24 May 2025

### Pilgrim Review

Our small pilgrim group of 22 this year gelled immediately. Our first stop was at the wonderful Hospederia San Poio. The accommodation was typical of a **monastery** hotel, and the welcome and hospitality very friendly from the busy Spanish staff with

very generous helpings of food which we all enjoyed, even though the fish was boney!!

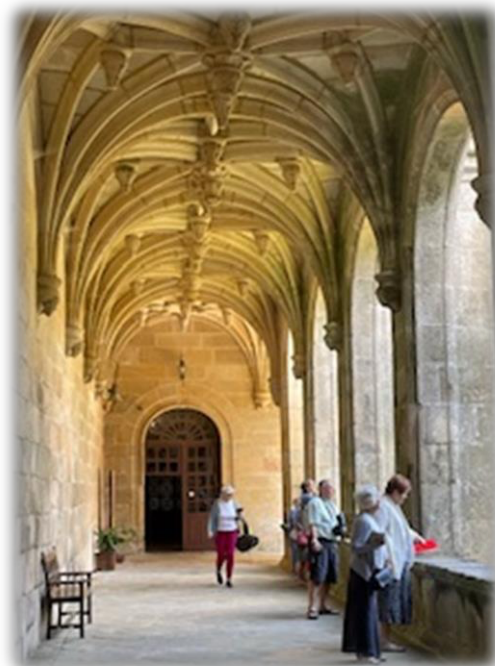
During these 5 days we had daily group meetings where Father introduced us to Pope Francis's **Laudato Si** encyclical and His thoughts on Creation and our relationship with the environment, people and the world around us and how we are all interdependent.

**The liturgies and prayers**, based around the encyclical, could not have been in a more suitable place. Father encouraged us to take our time to experience and enjoy nature fully whilst on Pilgrimage.

San Poio was a marvellous place do this with its grounds and **peaceful** gardens; wildlife, flowers and birds in abundance. Our meeting place was the Hospedaria chapel which was just as inspiring, with its colourful light from the marvellous stained glass windows, designed in the same way as in the Buckfast Abbey chapel. Mass here was also very intimate with us all joining Father around the altar.



The San Poio Monastery is also located on a diversion from the Portuguese Camino called the **Variant Espiritual** and it provides lodgings for Pilgrims walking the route. Tradition states that St James travelled along this route during his journey from Jerusalem to Santiago de Compostela evangelising.

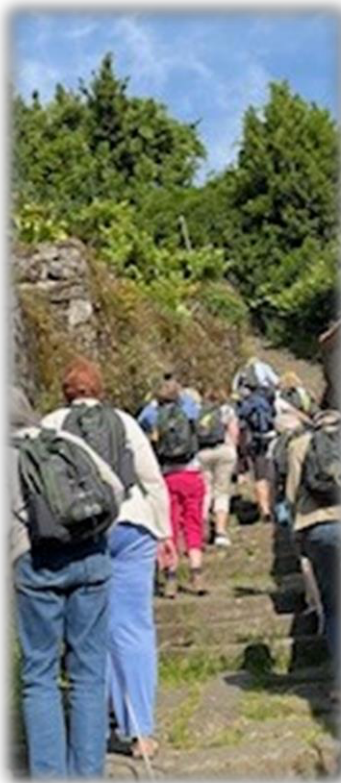




The path meanders down from Poio to a small historical fishing village called Combarro where we enjoyed wandering through the traditional streets of stone cottages interspersed with crucerios and horreos (ancient crosses and raised grain stores).

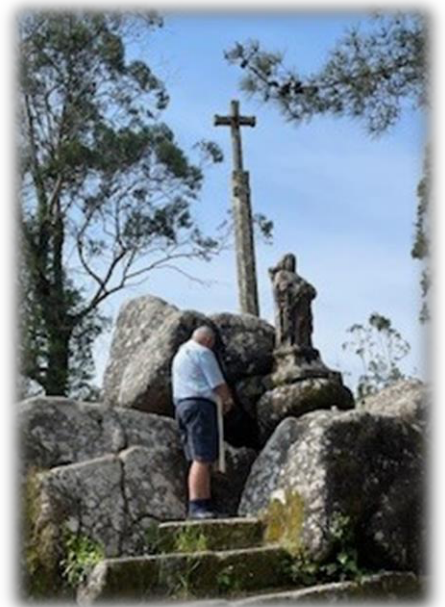
In the other direction the path goes to the town of **Pontevedra**, which we visited by coach on Friday. The darker gothic Basilica de Santa Maria a Major was decorated with orange lilies when we visited, whilst the Church of the Peregrina on the opposite side of town was lighter and unusual with its design around the scallop shell.

The pilgrim Variant Espiritual path passed this church and a few of us picked up the trail and followed the scallop shell and yellow arrow pilgrim signs along the 11k back to San Poio. A particular highlight of ours, as once out of Pontevedra the path was very rural and we were totally at one with the **nature around us**.

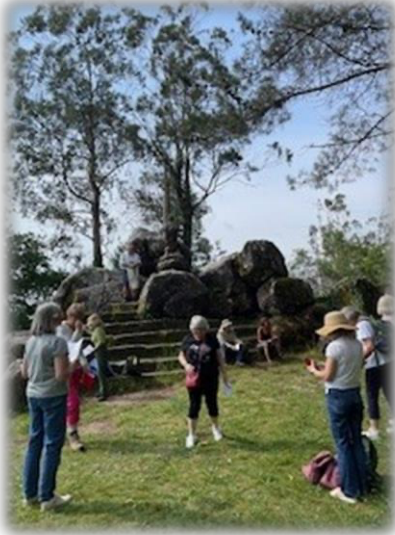


On Sunday we left Poio for our next stop in Santiago de Compostela, breaking our journey at Padron, where James boat was moored on his journey to evangelize the Galicians. We all climbed the steep, rocky steps to the place high above the town where there is a small hermitage and a spring that appeared when James banged his staff on the ground.

Father Philip climbed the rocks, where legend says that James preached to the local people, and led us in morning prayers, with the birds adding the musical accompaniment!







The large church back down in the busy town was dedicated to St James and also contained the mooring stone that his boat was originally moored to. A pleasant stop on our own journey....





## Onwards to Santiago de Compostela ...



We arrived here on the 18th May to stay at San Martin Pinario, where parts of the building date back to the origin of the city.



The following day we attended the **pilgrims mass**, concelebrated by Fr Philip, the highlight being the Botafumerio at the end of mass, which made it extra special.



A guided tour, attended by most of the group, told us the story of Paio, the hermit, who discovered the tomb of St James and his disciples, Theodore and Athanasius.



The following day some of us did the cathedral roof tour and museum,

which gave us spectacular views of the surrounding areas, while others explored parts of the Camino walks from Santiago.



A visit to the convent for **vespers** with the nuns, was a unique and reverential experience.

The following evening we attended the church of Santa Maria Salome, dedicated to the mother of St James, where Fr Philip gave a liturgy, full of interesting information, which was followed by mass there.

It was humbling to see hundreds of pilgrims descend on the square every day having completed their Camino Walk. The joy, happiness and relief was palatable. The pilgrimage was fantastic.

### **Further Reflections from San Poio Pilgrims.....**

One of the subjects Pope Francis focused on in his encyclical “Laudato Si” was to look at nature and how it relates to mankind.



Our **daily discussions** about creation, the environment and how it is evolving and what mankind is doing to it for good or bad was diverse.

Nature is all inspiring, the glory of God is reflected in everything around us, we need it and nature is reliant on us to keep it for future generations.

Towards the end of our Pilgrimage we visited Muxia, A sanctuary stands overlooking the powerful Atlantic Ocean. The rocky headland was carved smooth and split from centuries of rough seas and storms.



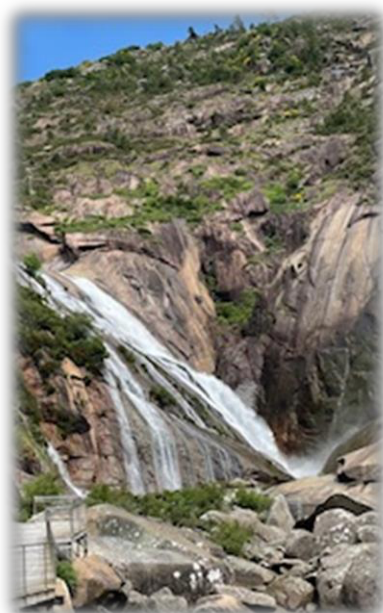
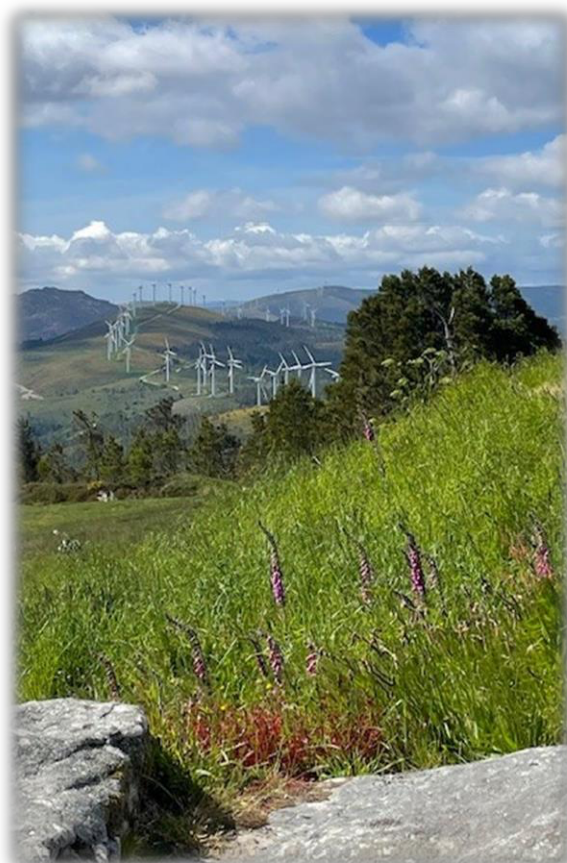




Legend tells us that Our Lady arrived on a stone boat where she encouraged St James in his quest to convert the locals to Christianity. On the day we visited it was sunny, slightly windy, the sea was calm and we were safe on land.

In the Gospel according to **Mark 4:35.41** we are reminded us that Jesus calmed the sea when all around were afraid. We could only imagine how terrifying it would have been with the power of the storm all around and relying on their faith in God to protect them. We found it a very calming and tranquil place and said prayers to our Lady of the Boat.

Mother Nature was at her best as we drove along the stunning and dramatic coastline on our way to Finisterre, It was totally awe inspiring. The blue sky the shapes of the clouds, every where we looked there were trees, of numerous varieties, shapes, sizes. How many shades of green ? Hills, valleys, glimpses of the sea far below, The wild flowers on the roadsides, flora and fauna, the fields freshly tilled and waiting for seeds to be sown. The citrus trees holding their fruit the cherry trees just waiting to be harvested, the bird songs, the streams.



It opened our eyes to the beauty of all around us. **This was God's creation at its best.**

Man has been involved in using nature for our good allowing us to access these stunning creations by making access easier by building road systems, and like it or not the use of windy turbines along the high ridges which went on for miles were hypnotic.





The waterfalls at Dumbria providing electricity were magnificent, engineering at its best, it was another place of calm despite the sound.

Our pilgrimage ended fittingly at Finisterre, for centuries people thought this rugged coast it was the end of the world. The wind was strong and it certainly took our breath away. No matter what man does to it, in the big scheme of things mother nature will always win.

Because we use the power of nature to help mankind, we have to be mindful that her resources may be lost and need protecting and respect. We need the natural world for our health and wellbeing.

This is the year of Hope, our prayer is for us all to be kind, thoughtful and do something useful to help mankind preserve Gods wonderful creation,

Amen

*This review was written by the pilgrim group of 2025.*

*Very many thanks for sharing your memories with the parish.*

*“I urge everyone to become pilgrims of hope, setting tangible goals for a better future. Let us not forget to keep “the little details of love” (Gaudete et Exsultate, 145): stopping, drawing near, giving a little attention, a smile, a caress, a word of comfort.” Pope Francis*







*If you would like to join Fr. Philip in Assisi next April 21st – 28<sup>th</sup> for a retreat week, please contact the parish office*