

## Cleator Pilgrimage – 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2016

### HOMILY



We come on pilgrimage to Cleator and to Our Lady's shrine in this special Year of Mercy, asking the Lord to touch us with his infinite loving mercy. In her song of praise and thanksgiving, her Magnificat, Our Blessed Lady exclaimed that God's mercy reaches from one generation to the next. Through her intercession may each one of us here today feel the warmth of the divine mercy and forgiveness for what we have and perhaps have failed to do.

Whenever we set out on pilgrimage we are embarking on a journey, leaving one place behind and moving to another and different place. We are answering God's call by being on pilgrimage today and hope for a new beginning, in the words of St. Paul, forgetting what is past and striving to what lies ahead. A pilgrimage, however short, allows us to clear our minds and concentrate on what is important on our life's journey towards God. In other words, what do we need to hold on to and what do we need to throw aside lest it hinders us?

Our Lord told the familiar parable in our gospel of the prodigal son. In the story the younger son made two journeys, one bad and one good. The first began in selfishness and ended in misery and disaster, when he left home and very quickly squandered all he possessed on reckless living. His second journey was of a different kind: he had learned his lesson and would make a pilgrimage back home, full of remorse, chastened and humbled, and throw himself on the mercy of his father. We know the welcome he received, which was utterly unexpected: the father's door was wide open and he was received back with open arms, his past forgiven and forgotten.

Jesus is telling us through this parable that the door of his Father's house is always open, and that mercy, forgiveness, and above all his divine love always await us. In the parable the Father's brushed aside his son's protestations, the fact that he had come back home was all that mattered in his eyes. In prayer and worship this afternoon let us approach our heavenly Father and we too will experience the warmth of his welcome and his merciful embrace, like the son in the story. We have Jesus' word for it!

We also pray today that Our Lady may look kindly on us pilgrims as we honour her at her shrine here in Cleator. We ask her intercession with her blessed Son for all the graces and favours we need on our pilgrimage through life. She doesn't disappoint, she won't let us down, and will unfailingly lead us today and every day to her Son, who came into this world to seek and to save all of us. Amen!

+Michael G Campbell OSA  
Bishop of Lancaster