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Pilgrimage---The Sacred Art: Journey to the Center of the Heart

Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook
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With few exceptions, we the spiritual take our piety seriously enough to put in a little effort for the cause. Seemingly, we must do more than merely believe in the divine, so each of us develops an individual portfolio of disciplines—prayer, meditation, chanting, tithing, abstaining, or countless other activities—under the belief that such and such will deepen our spiritual chops.

Likewise, the great and powerful religions all play by their own rules. For the most part, Jews do things differently from Christians, Muslims from Buddhists, and so on. Yet there is one esteemed practice that is broadly shared between the faiths: pilgrimage—excursions to shrines, monasteries, and sacred nature sites in search of spiritual nourishment and replenishment.

Why this universal desire to combine the physically demanding with an inward "journey of the heart?" In *Pilgrimage* (Skylight Paths Publishing, 978-1-59473-472-4) we find stunningly insightful answers to that question and an arsenal of new material to deepen our own connection to the divine. The aforementioned practices—prayer, meditation, pilgrimage—are not meant to spontaneously make something happen, rather, they are "intended to create openings, to make space, to grab our attention in the midst of our harried lives so that the spirit of the divine, already present, can be made known to us. … The ability to let go of preconceived notions about what should happen or what will happen during a pilgrimage helps a pilgrim remain open to the mystery of what is happening at the moment."

Mecca, Jerusalem, Santiago de Compostela in Spain, ancient monasteries in Nepal—all these places attract pilgrims, but the real journey, the most important journey, in fact, the "longest journey is the one between the heart and the head."

Episcopal priest and professor of practical theology Sheryl Kujawa--Holbrook has filled *Pilgrimage* with hundreds of masterful quotes (including the previous one by Howard Thurman), and her book should be sewn inside backpacks the spiritual world over.
MATT SUTHERLAND (Fall 2013)

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