

Pilgrimage as a Conversion of Heart

Pilgrimage is about conversion, a change of heart. The hope is that seeds sown in pilgrimage will grow in the days, weeks and months that follow.

Having completed this pilgrimage today, as you drive home, please think about your experience....

The Planners Experience

As the planners of this pilgrimage, our original intent was to offer a pilgrimage that might deepen a one's appreciation for nature and act as an invitation for us and other pilgrims to intensify our efforts to care for all creation.

However, what we as the planners thought we came for was just the beginning of our own path of personal conversion. While we recognize that our experience may not lead to the same place as yours, here we share here some of what we learned and invite you to consider opening your hearts as well.

We visited several sites at Ganondagan: Fort Hill, The Earth is Our Mother Trail, and the Trail of Peace. And we spoke with the Ganondagan Cultural Liaison.

From these experiences we learned about the:

- Efforts of the French, a Catholic Nation, to eliminate the Haudenosaunee as competitors in the fur trade and territorial and political rivals, included use of starvation by destroying their food supplies as well as killing them outright. Jesuits often accompanied the French military on these expeditions.
- Richness of Haudenosaunee traditions and spiritual beliefs; their daily prayer of gratitude, the *Ganonyok*; their approach to sustainability, One Dish, One Spoon
- Origin story of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Peace Maker, the Good Mind and the use of Talking Circles
- Doctrine of Discovery, how it began and its impact today (see below)

We began with curiosity and openness to what we might learn about nature, but along the way our eyes were opened to much more. We have experienced companionship, rich conversation, and peace. But as a result of learning about the Doctrine of Discovery, we have also experienced dismay, concern, and sorrow. We find ourselves in the midst of *Teshuvah*, or a process of repentance, and a desire to discover what acknowledgment, taking responsibility and seeking reconciliation would look like.

About the Doctrine of Discovery

In the latter half of the 1400s, three Papal Bulls were issued that are collectively referred to as The Doctrine of Discovery. Those documents permitted the seizure of land and the enslavement of non-Christians in "discovered" lands in Africa and the Americas. As a result of the Papal Bulls western European monarchies were permitted to enslave non-Christian indigenous people and seize their lands in the Americas and Africa. Almost 100 years later, Pope Paul III repudiated the ideas in those earlier Papal Bulls

In 2023 Pope Francis forcefully repudiated the belief underlying those Papal Bulls, but neither repudiation could not undo the enduring impacts of the injustices committed in the past and continuing in the present.

Many people, including most Catholics, are not aware of the Doctrine of Discovery or its historic and ongoing impact.

If the Jubilee Year is about seeing ourselves as "pilgrims on the earth....restoring access to the fruits of the earth to everyone," what might hope and reconciliation look like after visiting Ganondagan?

We invite you to make a gift of your time and/or thought by undertaking any of the following:

1. First Nation Peoples in the US and elsewhere encounter intense bias and "othering," even now.
We are a nation of immigrants, of people who arrived and were excluded and treated as less than, as "others". Why and when did your own family come here? What do you know about what that immigration experience was/is like for them?
2. Using resources listed below, learn more about the Doctrine of Discovery. (See resources on page 9)
3. Find ways to partner with the Seneca, Haudenosaunee, and indigenous people more generally. For example, you could
 - Sign up for monthly eNews Ganondagan Newsletter at <https://ganondagan.org>
 - Participate in Ganondagan Clean Up Days. <https://ganondagan.org>
 - Share with others your experience at Ganondagan and what you have learned
 - Participate in the guide-led tour on October 4th to learn more
 - Look for opportunities to ally with, and advocate for, Indigenous self-determination initiatives and efforts
4. Consider more deeply, the impact of the Doctrine of Discovery worldview and current parallels in our own time:
 - On immigration
 - On the treatment of refugees and immigrants in our own country
 - On current land use decisions in our country. For example, plans to develop oil and gas drilling and mining in sites sacred to indigenous people of the southwest, (Chaco Canyon of the Pueblo and Oak Flats of the Apache.)



