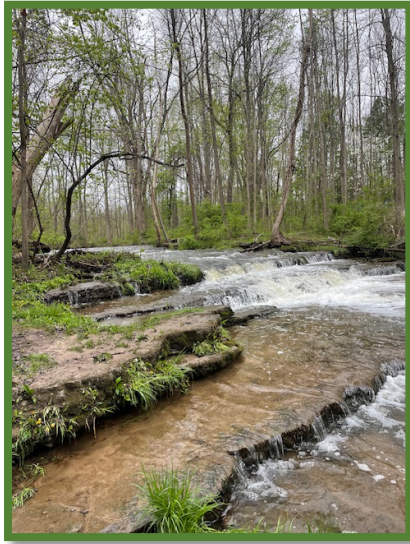


Jubilee Year 2025
Pilgrims of Hope for Creation
The Earth Is Our Mother Guided Meditation
Ganaondagan State Historic Site
7000 County Rd 41, Victor, NY 14564



Great Brook, May 2025

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During Jubilee Years, Catholics are called to examine our relationships with each other and our common home. We are to resolve conflicts, acknowledge and rectify harm caused, ask forgiveness, forgive debts, re-create equity, and embrace gratitude. Pilgrimage is an opportunity to undertake such a self-examination. In response to the call from the national Catholic Pilgrims of Hope for Creation program, the Finger Lakes Catholic Creation Care Covenant has assembled a variety of local "Pilgrimages of Hope for Creation."

All of the places we are recommending for pilgrimage are on lands historically lived upon and considered home by the Haudenosaunee, the indigenous people who lived in upstate New York long before the arrival of Europeans.

We note here how well the heart of the practice of Jubilee aligns with the Haudenosaunee teaching of the *Good Mind* practiced since the 12th century when the Peacemaker had the leaders of the 5 original Tribes of the Haudenosaunee form the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and bury their arrows under the Tree of Peace.

Throughout this guide we use the name Haudenosaunee as we refer to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and its People. Often referred to as the Iroquois Confederacy, the term Iroquois is what the French, Dutch and English chose to use. Haudenosaunee is the name preferred by the Confederacy itself. The Seneca, as the western most tribe of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, are also known as the “Keepers of the Western Door.”

Before embarking on this walk we suggest you read about the goals of Laudato si.

Why we offer this trail as a path for pilgrimage

The Guide for this walk in its entirety invites us to:

- Find God in all things, discovering nature as a pathway to spirituality
- Reflect on our role in responding to the “cry of the earth”
- Open our eyes, to think about kinship with creation. In Laudato si Pope Francis asks us to acknowledge our oneness with all of creation
- Learn from the richness of the Haudenosaunee culture and traditions

Before you leave home for Ganondagan, you might say this prayer:

A Prayer for Laudato Si’ Pilgrims of Hope in the Jubilee Year of 2025

God in Heaven,

As we begin our journey today, we pray that You will accept the efforts we make on this pilgrimage. We offer it in praise of You and with love for all that You have created.

Be our companion along the way, our guide at the crossroads, our strength in weariness, our defense in danger, our shelter in heat and cold, our light in darkness, our comfort in discouragement.

Open our hearts to everything that we encounter, to see You in our human brothers and sisters and in every being which You have made, for all things speak of You. Help us to understand Your will and to follow it with courage, confidence, and joy.

We pray that, with your grace and guidance, we will share your Good News with every creature and become agents of reconciliation and healing for all of Creation. May our witness be a leaven of authentic hope, the harbinger of the new heavens and the new earth which You have in store for us. Help us to remember that this pilgrimage is just one step on our journey to you.

We pray in a special way for our new Pope Leo and for his intentions. Give him the strength and wisdom he needs to guide your pilgrim Church on earth.

We ask this through Christ our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Opening Prayer at Ganondagan

Before you descend to the start of the Earth is Our Mother Trail, look over the rolling meadow that spreads out before you to the east and north.

- Listen to the wind.
- Hear the birds.
- What colors do you see?
- What scents ride on the air?

The tribes of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy view the natural world and its bounty as a gift and their community as connected to a living earth and a spiritual universe. They give thanks each day through the *Ganonyok*, a daily expression of gratitude that serves as a reminder to acknowledge and appreciate all things. The Ignatian Daily Examen in our Catholic tradition also begins with gratitude.

Call to mind what prompted you to come to this place today. What are you hoping for?

Can you weave your own prayer of gratitude now from the threads of the colors, scents, sounds you are noticing and, naming your hopes, release the prayer on the wind to find its way to God?

Pause and Ponder 1

Find a place in the meadow to stand.

Be still.

Go back in time. It is the 1500's. Imagine the scene in front of you. The Seneca have encamped in this area for hundreds of years. It is a time before the French and English have arrived.

You are surrounded by the village, longhouses and people. It is full of life, full of people, the old, the young, the children, babies.

- Can you hear their voices?
- What do you imagine they might be saying? Doing?

Walk west down the hill to the start of The Earth is Our Mother Trail on the left. Your destination is 1.8 miles distant at The Great Brook. There will be a bench there where you can sit and rest.

Don't rush.

Take your time.

Rest when you need to.

Look around....

As you walk this trail, read the plaques that explain how the Seneca honored, and learned to make use of, the abundant plant life in the forest.

Pause and Ponder 2

At some point when you stop to rest or look around, again take in all that surrounds you. Notice the enormous variety of plant and animal life here. All sharing the same air and ground. Some plants replacing others across the growing season with spent plants feeding the newly emerging ones.

Allow your senses to fully explore the plant and animal life before you. Take a moment to smell, breathe, taste, hear, see and feel the wind, the sun and shadows, the plant and animal life. Recognize that you too are a part of this creation. Notice any feelings you may become aware of.

Did you know....

- Birds of different feathers actually do flock together, sharing in their calls warnings of danger and their discovery of food sources?
- Trees do the same within and across species, releasing chemicals from their leaves and root hairs that travel distances to be picked up by other trees warning of predators or other threats
- Trees living in a mixed species forest are healthier than those in a planted in a woodland of only the one species

The plant, animal, and human world is a web of interdependent relationships. In Laudato si Pope Francis urged us to understand that everything is connected, plant and animal life on earth, fish and creatures of the sea, birds of the air, and all human life. Referencing Genesis 2:16, he also asks us "How shall we till and keep the garden of the world?"

Reflect

How does the path I choose in my own life affect the wider world of all creation? Do the choices I make recognize and respect that interconnectedness and the directive to till and keep the garden of the world?

Pause and Ponder 3

You have arrived at the most distant point of your walk, Great Brook.

As you sit here in this quiet spot, listen again, for the birds; for the wind as it moves through the trees and rustles the leaves; hear the water as it cascades over the stone steps; notice the colors of the early fall and the scents of the earth around you.

This is the Garden of Eden that was given to us to "till and keep".

Catholic social teaching has many facets but common to them all is the idea of seeking The Common Good, doing the best we can for all people and all God's creation. It is all about wisely tilling and keeping all that has been given us.

The Haudenosaunee have their own version of The Common Good. But their version is explicit in including the relationship between people and the Earth.

In the 12th century the tribes of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy shared an agreement about stewardship of the hunting grounds they held in common. It is referred to as "One Dish, One Spoon."

In order to preserve the bounty of their shared hunting grounds for their needs, and the needs of generations to come, they were only to take as much as game they needed. No more and no less.

Pope Francis also reminded us of this: the actions of each of us including how we use, or misuse the earth, the water, and the air around us affect others, near or far from us in time and space.

As you sit here, consider again your own choices.....How does the path I choose in my own life effect the wider world of all creation? How much do I take, how much do I give? How might a belief in One Dish, One Spoon, influence your choices going forward?

It is time to go back. Retrace your steps back to the Great Meadow.

Final Pause and Ponder

Standing at the edge of the Great Meadow, the grasses may be tall and golden at this time of the year. If the air is moving, waving grasses may greet you on your return.

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

- Reflect on what you have seen, felt, and maybe learned on this walk
- Wonder about what more you do not know about what lies “beyond the edge of the road.” What more might you want to know about that?
- What will you take away from here today?
- 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 your pilgrimage here today?

Closing Prayer

Can you weave a closing prayer of your own from the threads of this journey?

Can you:

- Give thanks for where you may have encountered God today, for what you have seen, felt, thought or experienced
- Ask God to continue to open your heart, for help to understand what else is your work to do...
- Ask God to guide you to become “an agent of reconciliation and healing for all of Creation”

Resources

1. Ignatian Eco-Examen
<https://www.ecologicalexamen.org>
2. Pope Francis Laudato si, 2015
https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html
3. Goals of Laudato Si can be viewed here:
<https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/laudato-si-goals/>
"These seven goals, provide guidance on urgent and immediate actions each one of us can take in the care of our common home. 'All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation....'" (Laudato si 14)
4. "The Letter," <https://theletterfilm.org>
5. Visit The Seneca Art & Culture Center <https://www.ganondagan.org>.
<https://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/confederacys-creation/>
<https://www.ganondagan.org/good-mind>
6. The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate—Discoveries from Secret World. P Wohlleben
7. "The Mysterious Life of Birds who Never Come Down." From the book Vesper Flights by H MacDonald . Essay is available at this link:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/29/magazine/vesper-flights.html>
8. The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World. RW Kimmerer, 2024

The following all relate to the Doctrine of Discovery

9. <https://www.ncronline.org/news/indigenous-call-vaticans-repudiation-doctrine-discovery-only-step> 7 min read
10. <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/doctrine-discovery-1493> longer read
11. A Historic Reckoning: Movement Leaders Respond to the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery offered by Land Justice Futures 60 min video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4afmi_d1nI
12. Sarah Augustine | What Would Decolonization Look Like: Imagining a Decolonized World 60 min video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jxv0r3vxzcY&list=PLgJWbGvTixKWnNNp_McXf8TMC6AU7nkPv
13. USCCB Letter on racism, including as experienced by First Nations People. Open Wide Our Hearts https://www.usccb.org/resources/open-wide-our-hearts_0.pdf

Ganondagan Pilgrimage Trail FAQs

Location

Seneca Art & Culture Center at Ganondagan State Historic Site
7000 County Road 41 (Boughton Hill Road) Victor, NY 14564

Parking: the northwest corner of County Rd. 41 adjacent to the brick house or at the Culture Center a little further west on Route 41

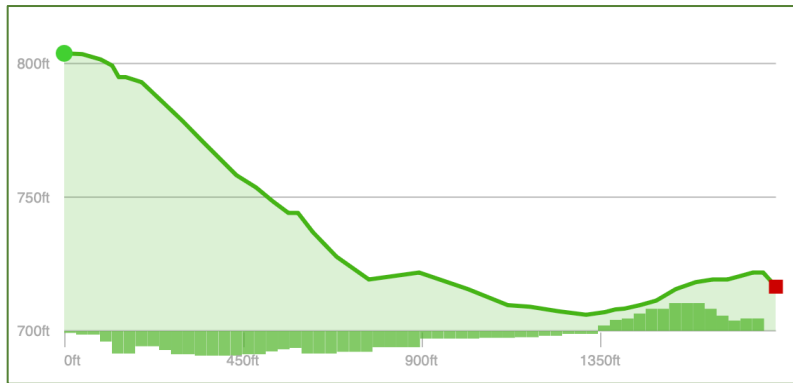
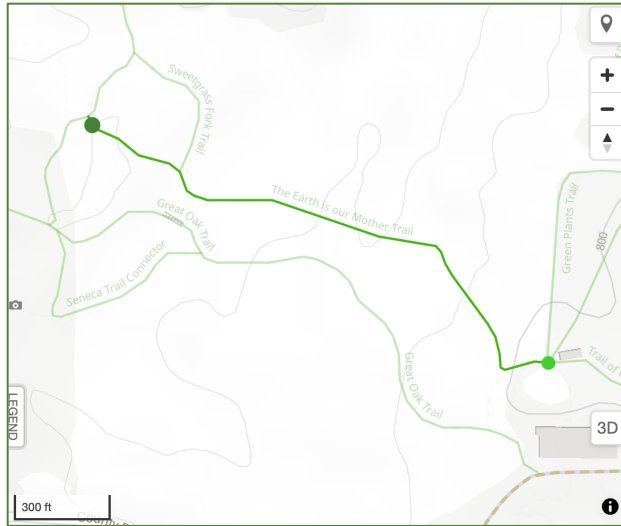
Difficulty: Look at this carefully to determine if this is a walk you can undertake.

- This is an out 1.8 miles and back trail, a total of 3.6 miles.
- There is a total of ~80 feet of descent outbound and ~80 feet ascent on returning. Start from the parking lot next to the brick house.
- Most children 4-5yo and normally active 60+ year olds should be able to do this and enjoy it.
- If you have significant strength, balance, or endurance problems, you might consider a different pilgrimage option, like the Trail of Peace
- As described below, this is a walk done best alone, in pairs, or in a small group of not more than 5. That is big enough for conversation, but still small enough for silent reflection at the places where you "pause and ponder."

A word about weather...

If there has been recent moderate to heavy rain, pick another day for this particular walk as the trail may be muddy and slippery. Or, using the same guide, walk the Trail of Peace in the lower right hand corner of the map below which can also be found here: <https://parks.ny.gov/documents/historic-sites/GanondaganTrailMap.pdf>





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 in 1532, Pope Paul III repudiated the ideas in those earlier Papal Bulls

Again 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.)