



## *Reflection from Bonnie Haghirian*

### **CAMINO DE SANTIAGO**

The Camino de Santiago is “The Way of St. James” in Spain, where thousands of pilgrims gather and walk the trail to the Cathedral of St. James. Some of the trails go through parts of Portugal as well as Spain. Pilgrims from all over the world find their path, pack their backpacks, and begin their journey with prayer. Many pilgrims come with family or friends, some come on their own, finding companions along the way. They share a common goal of reaching the Cathedral where the remains of St. James are interred, and they also come with the hope of deepening their faith.

I’ve never been to the Camino, but several of my friends have walked “The Way,” each having different experiences. But, all of us here in St. James Midtown has journeyed along our paths, some of us with family and friends, and some of us alone. We are pilgrims on our faith journeys, and we bring our past with us as we live in the present and hope for the future.

I came to St. James about eighteen years ago, after I settled in Kansas City, a year after beginning my teaching days at Notre Dame de Sion. After being in the parish of the Cathedral of St. Joseph, where I was very active in youth ministry, RCIA and Liturgy, my search for a faith community was a bit like Goldilocks’ adventure with the three bears. I tried various parishes and found that parishes with schools were so focused on school families, there wasn’t much room for a single, widowed person like me. I couldn’t find a good “fit.” I didn’t feel welcomed. So, I bopped around from church to church and friends kept telling me, “Come to St. James.”

Here I found a faith community where people had so many different journeys, I felt like I was coming home. My very first Sunday here, I was greeted and welcomed by people and I immediately felt like there was a place for me. There was such a wonderful palette of diversity in ethnicities, ages, families, and life experiences, I just kept coming back every Sunday.

St. James midtown is very much like the Camino de Santiago in Spain, only we don’t have to walk a few hundred miles to be here. At this point in our journey, though, we need to invite companions to accompany us. We need to invite people who attended St. James pre-Covid, and tell them we miss them and welcome them back. We need to be aware of people who come who we do not know and greet them the way I was greeted. We need to bring families with children here and tell them their children can hear the Word of God in Children’s Liturgy. We need to invite people who play instruments and who love to sing to come to our Spirit filled Masses. We need to invite friends and family, the parents of the newly baptized, folks who have lost their spouses, people who are looking for a parish where Christ is alive in the folks in our pews. Let’s walk as pilgrims on this journey and bring others with us.

*Peace,*

*Bonnie*