

FROM THE ARCHBISHOP

## A disciple's journey

On moving to Illinois in 2006, I underwent the normal newcomer rituals: I took the written driver's test, received an Illinois driver's license, registered to vote, opened a local bank account and, perhaps most significantly of all, acquired an I-Pass.

Not having regularly driven on toll roads in Arkansas or Tennessee, I found the I-Pass automatic credit card deductions an altogether new experience. No doubt in my pre-I-Pass weeks I paid tolls when I did not need to, failed to pay when I should have and sped through the I-Pass lane oblivious to the fact that I now owed money to the state of Illinois.

But after a few months, I was driving almost like a free-way veteran. Almost.

I understood the toll road system, more or less, but there were two things that still left me rattled: the brazen speeding of many drivers and their impatience with newcomers like me who didn't yet know which exit to take toward our destination. Everyone but me seemed to know that the speed limit is actually 80, and everyone but me seemed to know precisely where they were going.

The rush, the speed and the impatience gave new meaning to "peer pressure."

### Speed is alluring

Since moving to Washington in 2010, I've had similar experiences of initiation. I have traded in my I-Pass for a Good-to-Go pass, but the rest is, as Yogi Berra famously said, "Déjà vu all over again." Cars and trucks roam the freeways in intimidating packs, and the pressure to join the passing

throng is considerable.

My reluctance to change lanes quickly in heavy traffic has caused me to miss my exit a few times and has probably irritated other drivers. It's not the possibility of getting lost that intimidates but the unrelenting speed, the pressure, the feeling that I must do what everyone else is doing — and do it quickly.

Since I spend a great deal of time on the freeways, I have reflected on the experience often and think it would help illustrate a simple but important aspect of the Christian life — that we follow a different way.

The pressure is great to follow unquestioningly the prevailing trends. The temptation is formidable to consider those trends acceptable precisely because everyone seems to be following them. Speed is spectacularly alluring because it has an air of efficiency, confidence and exhilaration.

But speed also carries spectacular hazards, especially the hazards of superficiality and indifference. Modern life is much like a freeway. But discipleship is a pilgrimage.

### Slowing down

A pilgrimage is not quickly accomplished, and it entails frequent stops along the way for observing, pondering, praying and resting with loved ones and with God. A pilgrimage can



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take place in a big city in the clamor of rush hour, as packs of cars speed by, horns honking impatiently. Every day, every trip and every task can become a pilgrimage if we decide to live that way.

A pilgrimage is a deliberate journey, and to make a pilgrimage one must first slow down — even if everyone else is speeding.

Those making a pilgrimage never pass others along the way without looking them warmly in the eye and recognizing in them a sister and a brother — even if they nervously cut their eyes when we do.

Those making a pilgrimage recognize that each day offers the opportunity to learn a new lesson, deepen a relationship and mend a fence.

Those making a pilgrimage punctuate the day with peace: a few deep breaths when tensions flare, a few moments of deliberate silence, a few kind words with colleagues clarify the focus and lighten the load.

Those making a pilgrimage carry joy, not tension, from place to place. When they walk through the door, everyone's spirits are lifted.

Those making a pilgrimage stop regularly to pray. Pray for the person who looked away. Pray for those rushing by, faces lined with worry. Pray to be better persons. Pray to grow closer to God. Pray to be instruments of peace. Pray for no reason at all.

Those making a pilgrimage reflect on God's word as life's roadmap — a lamp for the feet, as the psalmist says.

### Hoping through life

Those making a pilgrimage take God's hand and let him lead, even

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You may send it to him at Archbishop Sartain's Prayer List, Archdiocese of Seattle, 710 Ninth Ave., Seattle, WA 98104.

through the dark valley, where the pavement runs out.

Those making a pilgrimage have a destination — to be with God forever — but know that even though the journey may not end today, whatever happens today is an important step in that direction. For them no day is ever unimportant, no step — however halting or small — is without possibilities.

Those making a pilgrimage do not rush through life. They hope through life. They recognize that just as each day is a gift from God, so can each day be returned to God as a gift, a gift he will accept with love.

A Methodist minister friend once told me a beautiful story about pilgrimages.

It seems that a missionary to Native Americans was collecting money from church members for a new building. A frail, elderly woman who lived many miles from church walked the long distance to contribute her widow's mite. The minister thanked her for her generosity but added, "You did not have to walk all this way. I would have gladly come to you."

Surprised, she responded, "My journey was part of the gift."

So it is with us. Even if the world rushes around us, we can give each moment to God. We are on a pilgrimage, not a freeway.

**Every day, every trip and every task can become a pilgrimage if we decide to live that way.**