



FATHER Patrick Mugavin admires the incredible view from the top of a mountain with a 1400 metre summit.

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One foot after the other as Fr Patrick walks his Camino

TESSA HAYWARD

HAMILTON'S Father Patrick Mugavin is walking a 640-kilometre camino in Spain, a route taken by Saint Ignatius of Loyola in 1522.

Pilgrims walk virtually the same route that St Ignatius did, pass through many of the towns, pray at churches and marvel at the same natural wonders that he did.

Fr Mugavin arrived in Loyola on September 2 and visited the basilica built beside the original castle where St Ignatius lived.

He is in a group that includes Fr John Fitzgerald from Warnambool, Fr Joe Taylor from Shepparton and Vin and Sandra Dillon.

They began the pilgrimage on September 3. "I was touched by mass celebrant Michael's words: 'that we be overwhelmed with the experience of the love of God, even to tears,'" Fr Mugavin said.

Before they set out on the journey, they touched the door of the house from which St Ignatius set out, to seek his blessing.

The next day they walked from Zumarraga to Arantzazu.

"Today's walk was along the most beautiful valleys into the steep mountains, with a strength and breath-sapping climb to the summit of 1400 metres," Fr Mugavin said.

"It was an excruciating climb which necessitated a well earned lunch break, with boots off to air tired and sore feet."

They then descended into the ancient sanctuary of Our Lady of Arantzazu, a Franciscan

sanctuary located at Onati, in Spain's Basque country.

Fr Mugavin said St Ignatius had set out from his home to walk there barefoot and spend a night in prayer at the shrine of Our Lady.

"His great love of Mary marked his life hereon and he was moved to vow himself to celibacy, leaving him free to follow and serve the Lord in whatever way he was guided by God's will for

him," he said.

The pilgrimage group then walked from Arantzazu to Araia.

"What a splendid day we had of exquisite scenery and joyful company as we set off from the sanctuary with a testing climb followed by a gentle walk down to Araia," Fr Mugavin said.

"Half way up the climb we came to the spring where the Virgin is said to have appeared to the shepherd."

The custom on visiting the fountain is to bless oneself then to bless the glass face of the shrine.

"Know that all those who have asked me to carry their prayers and pray for and with them, are constantly in my heart and prayerful walking. I peruse the written notes each evening," Fr Mugavin said.

He said in the early days of the camino they reflected on their own pilgrimage through life and the many graces received in good and bad times.

"Walking down Araia we are overcome with the beauty of God's creation, and this reflects (within) on how God has created and gifted us as his children to love and serve him with all our hearts," he said.

The group's Spanish companions have now left them, but not before briefing them on not getting lost, managing blisters and being pilgrims in a long and great tradition.

The 28-day outer and inner journey still has a long way to go across mountains, deserts and plains before ending in Manresa near Barcelona at the end of September.



HALF way up a mountain climb, Father Patrick Mugavin came across the spring where the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to the shepherd.

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