

BC High Pilgrims Journey to Ignatian Sites in Boston

BC High students make a local pilgrimage to kick-off the Ignatian Year.

Five hundred years ago St. Ignatius Loyola was struck by a cannonball at the Battle of Pamplona. This injury began his conversion from knight to pilgrim and led him to found the Society of Jesus along with his friends St. Francis Xavier and St. Peter Faber. To celebrate this 500th anniversary and the opening of the Ignatian Year, and to conclude their own academic year, a group of BC High students participated in the [“Journey with Ignatius”](#) app and took part in a weekly morning faith sharing. Embracing the spirit of St. Ignatius the Pilgrim, some members of the group even made a pilgrimage of their own to important Ignatian and Jesuit sites around the city of Boston.

The six student pilgrims were accompanied by Mrs. Jennifer Manning, religion teacher and program leader of the Michael D. White '70 Center for Emerging Leaders, and Fr. Patrick Nolan, SJ, assistant director of enrollment and chaplain to athletics. At 8 a.m., on Wednesday, June 9, they began their journey from BC High with a prayer from the *Book of Blessings*:

*May the Lord guide us and direct our journey in safety.
May the Lord be our companion along the way.
May the Lord grant that the journey we begin,
relying on him, will end happily through his protection.
Amen.*

After crossing Morrissey Blvd, the pilgrims walked through the Savin Hill neighborhood and approached an overlook of Boston. There they paused to recall how St. Peter Faber, an early companion of St. Ignatius, offered instructions for young Jesuits going on pilgrimage:

*Entering any city or town,
we should call upon the angels, archangels, saints and patrons of that city or town.
We should greet them and call on them to assist us...
pray to them on behalf of the city or town placed in their charge.*

The pilgrims immediately faced a “Road Closed” sign, forcing them to walk over to another street. They shared a laugh of hitting a roadblock right after a “mountain top” experience.

At Cristo Rey Boston High School, President Rosemary Powers welcomed the pilgrims with bagels and juice in the library and explained to them that this high school had been the old St. William’s parochial school. The students were happy to find out that their former principal, Mr. Stephen Hughes '73, P' 98, attended St. William’s as a boy. In the library, Principal Thomas Ryan talked about his Ignatian roots in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and his own cannonball moment when an injury led to a change in course from coaching to focusing on teaching. Powers, Ryan, and Fr. Nolan shared

their Cristo Rey stories and told the story of the original Cristo Rey in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago, in which the Jesuits, responding to the requests of the people, created an innovative educational model whereby students from low-income families could earn a Catholic college prep education while working a day a week at an internship that helped to pay their tuition. After a few moments of prayer in the beautifully decorated school chapel, the pilgrims were off to the Savin Hill T-stop.

Three stops later, the pilgrims got off at Broadway in South Boston. They crossed the West Fourth Street Bridge, walked under I-93, and arrived in the South End. A mile later they stood at the original location of BC High on Harrison Avenue. At the former Church of the Immaculate Conception, Mrs. Manning asked the pilgrims to look up at the statue of Mary and the words, “to Jesus through Mary.” She talked about her devotion to the Blessed Mother and asked the pilgrims to reflect on how Mary was significant in the life of St. Ignatius, especially during several turning points in his life. After walking around the block to see where Boston College was originally founded and posing for a photo taken by a stranger, the pilgrims were on the move again.

A half-mile walk took the pilgrims to the front steps of the Cathedral of the Holy Cross. There, dressed in his Franciscan habit was Fr. Will Tarazza, OFM Cap., a theology classmate of Fr. Nolan, who greeted the pilgrims. As a Jesuit high school alumnus and a Capuchin Franciscan friar, Fr. Tarazza shared the story of how, while recuperating, St. Ignatius Loyola was inspired by the story of St. Francis of Assisi. Then Msgr. Kevin O’Leary, rector of the Cathedral, welcomed the pilgrims and shared details about the Cathedral and its recent renovation. While he gave the pilgrims a tour of the cathedral, an organ practice was taking place. After a brief reflection on the coats of arms of Cardinal Seán O’Malley, OFM Cap. and Cardinal Richard Cushing, BC High ’13 (whose episcopal motto, *Ut cognoscant Te* [“That they may know You”] was incorporated into BC High’s school seal), the pilgrims walked back to the Broadway T-stop to head back to BC High.

Back at 150 Morrissey Blvd., the pilgrims rested their feet, rehydrated with refilled water bottles, and bonded over pizza. As they had shared weekly over the course of the last month, their reflections were modelled on St. Ignatius Loyola’s desire for spiritual conversation and his insight in his Spiritual Exercises (§77) which says that after a period of prayer (or in this case, a pilgrimage) that one recall what one learned about God, himself, or others. What had meaning? What was fruitful? What was a grace or a gift that one wanted to savor and recall during the next prayer period or to put into practice in one’s life?

Mrs. Manning was overwhelmed by the generosity of the people we encountered along the way. Johan, similarly, was struck by the generous act of the strangers who stopped to take their photograph. Damian remarked on the hospitality of Fr. Tarazza and Msgr. O’Leary at the cathedral. Will commented on a conversation with a Bruins fan on the T ride home. Ben reflected on how the pilgrimage allowed him to see God in all things, according to the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola.

Fr. Nolan concluded with a blessing for returning pilgrims from the *Book of Blessings*:

Blessed are you, O God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. From all races of the earth you have chosen a people dedicated to you, eager to do what is right. Your grace has moved the hearts of these, your friends, to love you more deeply and to serve you more generously. We ask you to bless them, so that they may tell of your wonderful deeds and give proof of them in their lives.

*May God, the Lord of heaven and earth,
who so graciously has accompanied you on this pilgrimage,
continue to keep you under his protection.*

*May God, who gathered all his scattered children in Christ Jesus,
grant that you will be of one heart and one mind in Christ.*

*May God, whose goodness inspires in you all that you desire and achieve,
strengthen your devotion by his blessing.*

Amen.

While the theme of pilgrimage is a rich one for many of the world's great religions, Christians' desire to make a devotional journey to a holy place is rooted in Scripture and the Tradition of the Church. In Genesis, God called Abram, "Go forth from your land... to a land that I will show you." Luke's Gospel tells of Jesus and his parents making a yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Early Christians continued the practice of journeying to a shrine when they would visit the sites of the martyrdoms of the apostles, in Rome (Sts. Peter and Paul) or Santiago de Compostela (St. James). When St. Ignatius Loyola was healthy enough to get back on his feet, he made local pilgrimages to shrines of the Blessed Mother until he eventually fulfilled his desire to visit the Holy Land. Like these past holy travelers, the BC High pilgrims' desire and realization was not only to arrive to meet God at their holy destinations, but to encounter the presence of God in the people they met along the way. What an inspiring first step towards celebrating the Ignatian Year!

Click [here](#) to learn more about how BC High is joining Jesuit institutions and the Society of Jesus around the world in celebrating the Ignatian Year.





