

Experiences of attending the Rose Prince Pilgrimage

July 6-8, 2018 at Fraser Lake, BC

Graydon Nicholas



I got a phone call from Father Vince James, OMI, in April 2018 asking if I could come to the **27th Rose Prince Lejac Annual Pilgrimage** and share two talks. Bishop Stephen Jensen of the Diocese of Prince George asked him to contact me to be a speaker. I met Bishop Jensen in September 2017 at the Plenary Session of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) gathered in Cornwall, Ontario.

I agreed to participate and looked forward to the Pilgrimage. I arrived in the early morning hours of July 6th

at Fraser Lake. I am attaching information of the Pilgrimage. Lejac was a site for an Indian Residential School where the Carrier Nation sent their children to attend school. Rose Prince was one of the students. Her story is a remarkable one because she decided to remain at the school after her graduation and worked there. She died at a young age of 34 and was buried on the grounds. When her grave had to be relocated, the coffin opened and revealed that her body had not decayed, her clothes were intact and only the flowers decayed.

The pilgrims were indigenous and non-indigenous persons who brought their children with them and are devoted to the spiritual life of Rose Prince. Many people have indicated that they have received healings and cures through her intercessions. I met pilgrims who shared with me of their own personal spiritual journeys with Rose Prince.

My first talk was sharing of my own personal spiritual journey of healing at a silent Ignatian Retreat in Guelph, Ontario in March 1986. My second talk was on Our Lady of Guadalupe and Her apparitions to Saint Juan Diego on December 9-12, 1531 in Mexico City and the evangelization and conversion of nine million Indigenous peoples between December 1531-1541. I was also asked to give an impromptu testimony of personal healing after Mass on Saturday.

I was very moved by meeting and hearing the stories of the pilgrims and their humble faith in Jesus. They came from Yukon, Yellowknife, Saskatchewan, Alberta and all over British Columbia. A Teepee was set up where the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament took place. Pilgrims came with their tents, trailers and campers. Meals were prepared by dedicated families who took turns for breakfast, lunch and supper. The stage where the Altar was set up was decorated with fresh red Roses donated by a woman from Vancouver. She told me that the Roses were shipped to her from Ecuador.

Three Masses were held. The Mass on Friday night was celebrated by Father Ken Anderson, who was ordained a month earlier. His family members were regular pilgrims in the past and brought him along. The Healing Mass on Saturday afternoon was celebrated by Father Laboucane. The Mass on Sunday was celebrated by Bishop Jensen who was in the seminary with Father Ken Weir of our diocese (St. John, New Brunswick).

It was a blessed and faith-filled pilgrimage. It was I, a visitor, who received an outpouring of graces and acceptance by the pilgrims. I am grateful for this cherished memory. The faith of the pilgrims was genuine, humble and sincere. **Highway #16** is located between Prince George and Prince Rupert. It is along this highway that tragic disappearances of indigenous women and girls has taken place. As I walked on the shoulder of a portion of the highway, I prayed my daily rosary for those who were murdered and whose bodies have not been found.