



better, when we joked, when we listened to each other. Other moments called for silence. Not that it was imposed. Rather one felt drawn by the surrounding nature to delve deeper into its silence. It was that sort of comforting silence that helps in putting pieces together.

Walking alone or with others on a road that is not familiar, nor having the route planned, is somehow strange. Usually when one goes hiking or walking, one would have a plan for a route in mind. The Camino routes however were all planned by other pilgrims, sometimes decades or centuries earlier. All the pilgrim has to guide him are the milestones with the characteristic signs of the Camino: a yellow arrow and a scallop shell. This makes the Camino very much a metaphor of life. In life we often think we're in command, but a little wisdom tells us that in fact we're not. We often journey through life quite blindly, but if we are wise we follow the right signs. What are the signs of life? These could be anything, and varying for each person. They could be experiences, they could be persons, they could be a phrase that we hear, they could be a passage from the Bible. Anyone embarking on the Camino de Santiago shouldn't look at it as a bracket in his or her life, but rather as life.

Personally speaking, one of the things that I cherished during the whole Camino experience was living with the essential. I usually find it hard to travel light. I'm used to always taking with me extra stuff for whatever situation that could crop up. However having to walk an average of 20 km daily, I felt the need to take as few things with

me as possible and my backpack did not exceed 10kg, even though (travelling to and from Spain included) we spent 11 days away from home. This was beneficial for me on a human level. But moreover, as a person with Religious Vows, the Camino was for me a spiritual moment that helped me return to basics.

The Camino is a testimony that the Christian faith is not merely a private matter. The Christian faith brings together people into one community and as such has strong cultural and social dimensions. If the fact that the Son of God became flesh and lived in community was not enough to attest to this social dimension, countless elements throughout the history of the Church have shown that anyone who seeks to live a personal relationship with Christ is somehow pushed to show their love towards their neighbour. As I was walking, I could see this concretely in the hundreds of people I met walking on the same route as our group. A strong sense of fellowship could be felt with these people with whom we had never met before and with whom we had not agreed to meet. The Camino brought us together and there was mutual respect and a friendly disposition towards everyone.

The Camino de Santiago is not a parallel bracket in life, but part of the larger journey and pilgrimage that is life. The Camino is life and the road goes ever on.

