



"You should think about walking BOTH caminos...just in case." Stories from the Camino, Round 5

Welcome to the last round of 'Stories from the Camino'! It's been a pleasure sharing with you some of the things we've seen God do this year! While engaging the Camino and the pilgrims that walk it isn't what we do as part of our typical ministerial efforts, it is nonetheless an amazing opportunity to share Christ with those that are thirsty for something this world cannot offer them. Furthermore, it's a spiritually refreshing change of pace for our family, and for that we're grateful.



Check out this photo of a sign (see above) that's on the façade of the building where we volunteer at. *Even right now as you're reading this, there are pilgrims walking by it.* It's the verse John 14:6, but in Spanish. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Interestingly enough, many pilgrims decide they want to take a picture of this sign but have absolutely no idea where this saying originates from.

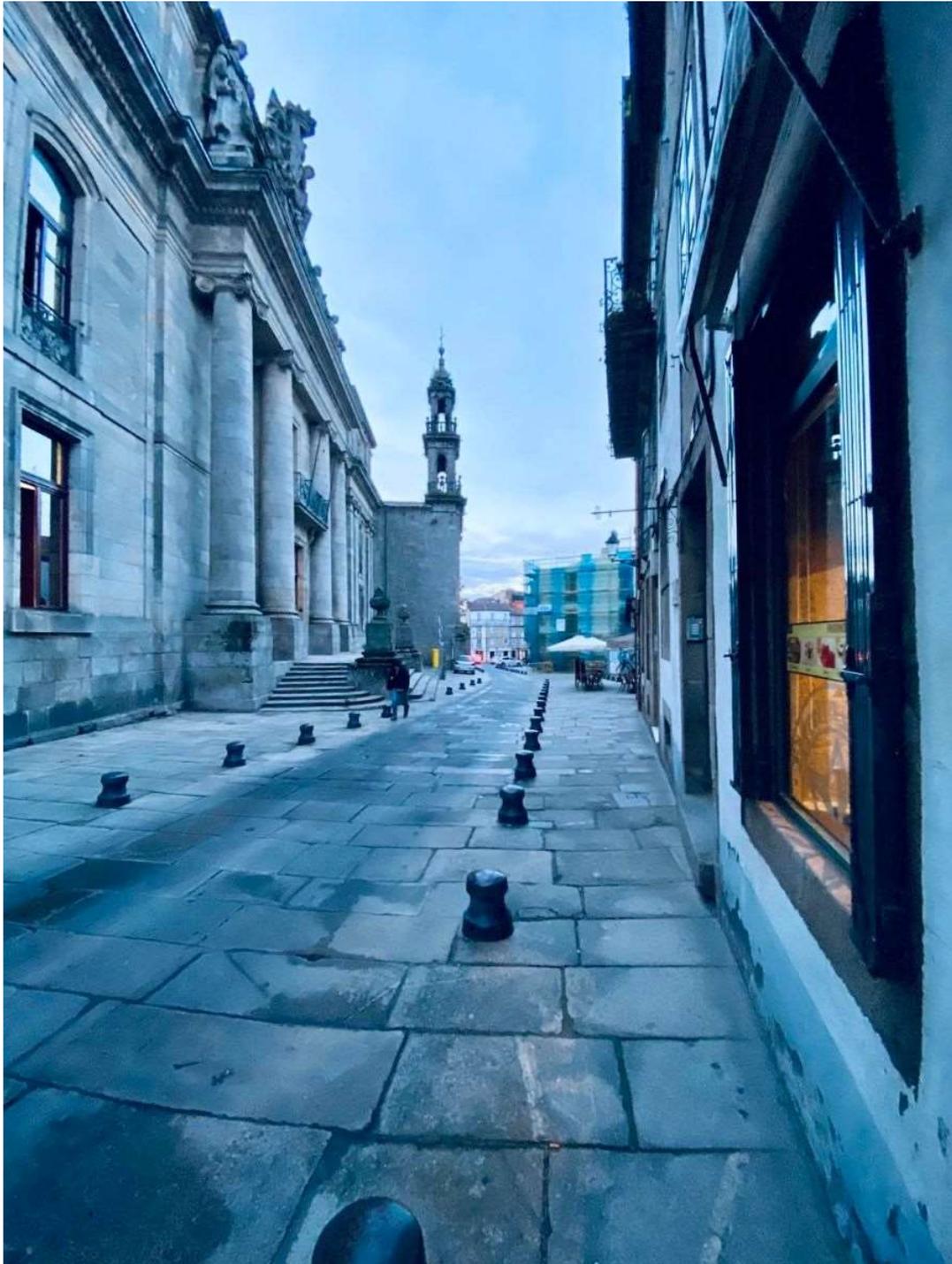
Anytime I'm not already engaged in a conversation and I happen to see someone snapping a photo of this sign, I try to immediately figure out if they know it came from the mouth of Jesus Himself. I give them a very brief summary of Jesus' life and ministry here on Earth, usually concluding with the Great Commission. To put it bluntly, I try to make sure they know the following:

No Jesus = No Great Commission = No St. James = No Camino de Santiago

Sadly, the modern day Camino is more focused on the supposed power found in the bones of St. James than it is on the person St. James followed to begin with!

Often times it's quite fascinating to the pilgrims when they discover that James was

following Jesus' commands literally and taking the Good News to what, at that time, was known as THE ACTUAL ENDS OF THE EARTH.



As I was explaining this to one mother and her older teen son, I emphasized the reality that I don't believe there is power in the bones of St. James, but rather that I KNOW there is only power found through Jesus, the man whom St. James followed. This confident assurance

seemed to make her uncomfortable, and I reminded her that Jesus was the man who raised from the dead and St. James didn't. His bones are proof of that.

She politely informed me how impossible it is to ever really KNOW anything for certain, and she encouraged me to walk 'El Camino del Salvador" (The Trail/Way of the Savior) in addition to walking the Camino de Santiago. I had never heard of this trail, so I asked her to explain it to me. She elaborated and eventually said, "Well, I was kind of like you not too many years ago. I thought maybe the Savior, Jesus, had power that other people didn't have, so I walked the Camino del Salvador in hopes that He'd help me, but as soon as I finished the Camino del Salvador, I immediately began walking the Camino de Santiago, just in case St. James really does have the power to forgive people from their sins as well. You can never be too sure, ya know." She quickly assured me she really had to be getting on her way, but she wished me luck in finding the true source of hope, just as she was hoping to do someday as well.

Her calm nature and gentle way of disagreeing with me sticks with me, because she almost seemed content in her uncertainty. She was hopeless, and even admitted to that. And because of the grief I found in her eyes, I can still picture her face, and it just makes me sad that she genuinely has yet to find what she's searching for. It grieves me that a 'Camino del Salvador' even exists, for I confidently know that the only way to the Father is through faith in Jesus Christ, not a walk or penance or any good work that I can do or accomplish! I'm praying she discovers this one day for herself as well.



Over the past couple months we've shared quite a few stories involving pilgrims, but I'd like to get a bit more personal and share some encouragement our team walked away with after ministering both to one another and the pilgrims throughout the week.

Here are just a few of the takeaways the team members articulated:

- "God doesn't need fancy, big, loud, or special. He just needs availability, and I can (and should) be available!"
- "That Jesus really is the way, the truth, and the life. If Jesus wouldn't have ever come and died for us, we wouldn't even have a way to God at all."
- "Don't be afraid to challenge God. He is big enough to meet your needs."

Again, in concluding this season of 'Stories from the Camino', I'd love to cordially invite (again!) you, your family, your small group, your church, WHOEVER to get involved with what God is doing over here! Send us an email to chat dates and times you're interested in sending a team over. Not only would we love *to minister alongside of you* during your trip, but we'd also love *to minister to you* and *receive ministry from you* as we all serve the Lord together. He is able to do far more abundantly above and beyond all that we ask or think or

imagine, and to HIM be the glory!

Thank you for you continued investment in all that HE is doing! May HE be praised and honored and glorified! Amen.

**Much love and blessings to you all,
The Casey Family**