

## **Food for the journey**

This is the second of a series of reflections on different aspects of the Walsingham pilgrimage.

This year we had our first Eucharist at the very beginning of our journey. Most people seemed to appreciate this and I hope it will be a pattern for the future.

As well as relieving pressure on the timetable when we arrive in Walsingham, there is something very appropriate about starting a pilgrimage by celebrating the self-offering of Jesus and offering ourselves with him (in the words of the Book of Common Prayer) as “a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice.”

The purpose of any Christian pilgrimage, like the purpose of life as a whole, is to become more closely united with Jesus Christ whose heavenly banquet is our final hope and who is present in many different ways in the Eucharist:

*in each other as we gather round his altar,*

*in the Scriptures as we hear his words addressed to us,*

*in the priest who breaks the bread for us,*

*in holy communion.*

It is of course holy communion itself which unites us most closely with Jesus and strengthens us for our journey. As well as feeding us spiritually, this reminds us of all that Jesus did for us and renews our hope in what he has in store for us.

It is not accidental that the last communion we receive before death is called “viaticum”, meaning “food for the journey”. Although this word strictly refers to the Eucharist that sends us on our final journey, it is also an appropriate description of every act of communion as we are set forward on the next stage of our journey through life. So what an appropriate way to begin a pilgrimage.

So as we come together from our different parishes to begin our shared journey to Walsingham at St John’s, Rowlands Castle at 8 a.m. on Easter Friday, April 26th 2019, we shall have in mind first of all the wonder of the love of God shown in the self-offering of Jesus who went up to Jerusalem knowing full well what awaited him there, but we shall also know that his sacrifice has made possible our own journey to our heavenly Father and also gives us strength and courage to travel every day