

Praised be Jesus Christ

Pilgrimage reflection (June 1-July 14, 2026)

"We never know when the most beautiful moment of our life is going to happen." (Msgr. James Shea 2025 retreat)

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Mt.11:28-30)

After nearly twenty-six hours of traveling from St. Louis to Thuine, Germany, my heart suddenly felt an overwhelming sense of joy and excitement as we approached the gates of the Motherhouse. Seeing all the sisters gathered outside to welcome us made my heart feel so full. Reverend Mother Maria Cordis was the first to greet us. The only words I could say were, "I am home." Home is a place of safety. This is what I experienced! This is where my family is; this is where it began with the "yes" of our foundress, Mother M. Anselma. Her spirit lives on in each sister. Mother M. Anselma became real to me as I walked and prayed where she did so many years ago.

As I greeted the sisters, I felt loved. We may not speak the same language...but we speak the language of love. Love for Jesus Christ Crucified, love for our Congregation and love for each other.

As we entered the Christ the King Church, it was as if Jesus was looking at me with such Fatherly affection.

We arrived in Alton in the evening on July 14th. All the sisters were there to greet us. After singing "Holy God, we Praise Thy Name" we shared a few highlights from our pilgrimage. It was not the places we went or the things we did that made this pilgrimage so blest-it was how the Lord chose to work in my heart and soul.

I was back in St. Elizabeth Convent in Rockford in the evening of July 15th. As I knelt in our Chapel the following morning, I experienced an overwhelming spirit of gratitude for the blessings the Lord showered upon me during the six weeks of pilgrimage. I read the gospel for day. "Come to me..." Surprisingly my heart felt calm and peace. This passage came alive for me that morning. Before beginning my pilgrimage, my heart was heavy and burdened by what I see and hear from patients in the Hospital. I needed to go away and rest with the Lord and in His immense love for me; and to be loved by Jesus and the sisters I met.

During my time away from the busyness of the Hospital, I came to a deeper understanding of the need to make BEING with the Lord my priority; in this way I can share His love with those I encounter in my Ministry of Pastoral Care.

This has been a renewal for me. I want to end by quoting from the song "Breathe" by Jonny Diaz: "Breathe, just breathe. Come and rest at my feet and be, just be. Choas calls, but all you need is to take it in, fill your lungs, the peace of God that overcome. Just breathe. So let your weary spirit rest, lay down what's good and find what's best -just breathe."