

Pilgrimage Q&A

Hello, interested pilgrims! We are so excited you are considering joining us for this beautiful pilgrimage in the footsteps of Mary. I have had a flurry of emails since the registration opened, so I wanted to answer some of your questions in this announcement in hopes of covering many of your questions. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have other questions. Once you register, you will also receive detailed instructions, packing lists, and additional important information.

Can I bring my husband along?

This pilgrimage is for women only. We have limited spots open to “working men” who lead the pilgrims, set the pace, administer first aid, and other general support. If your husband may be interested in this service, please have him reach out to me, and we will determine if it is a good fit.

Can I bring my children or nursing infants?

No, I am afraid children are not allowed. The sleeping accommodations are communal, and the demands of the pilgrimage do not allow for children to be present. We also spend large amounts of the day in silence, so children, with their wonderful demands and need for attention, are not suited to this event. You can, however, pray for your family and children intensely during these days. For women who can get away from their household demands for a few days, they find they come home tired but refreshed to begin life in an even deeper way.

Some men or other caregivers care for the children so the mothers can participate in the pilgrimage. Children and families are welcome to cheer their moms on from the Shrine of our Lady of Good Help on the last day of the pilgrimage. Families who choose to participate in this option should plan on being at the Shrine around 9:45-10:00am and wait by the entrance to the Shrine. As soon as we arrive, the pilgrims offer a prayer first and then can greet their families. Families are welcome at the closing mass. We cannot however provide transportation back to the starting point for anyone other than the women.

What are the accommodations like?

We sleep in a big church gym the first night. The parish has provided us with cots the first night in the past, but there are no guarantees. We advise women to bring a sleeping mat and sleeping bag. The parish has provided a shower trailer for us in the past, but again, there are no guarantees. We will stay in an Abbey the second night, sleeping on mats on a carpeted floor. We provide women with large body wipes each night to “wash/shower.” Somehow even with all the walking, the women look radiant from the inside out when arriving at the Shrine! Trust me...we really do!

Will I need to carry all my belongings?

No, we have arranged for your luggage to be transported by a team (usually amazingly joyful college-age men) in a Uhaul daily. You only need to bring any personal items you require and/or medications. We recommend the women have a small camelback backpack (like a small bladder for hiking) or a strapped belt that holds a large water bottle. I usually have kleenex along with me, just in case.

Will there be bathrooms and breaks?

Yes! We are women, and we need bathrooms! For the most part, we stop every 2-3 hours at a site with bathrooms. We walk on trails and country roads, and the “support” team has wet wipes and Ziploc baggies for emergencies. If you have to duck off the trail for a minute or disappear for a second in a cornfield, no one notices. You won’t be the first or the last! But I do schedule breaks!

Will we have Mass and opportunities for Confession?

Yes! Of course! The first night, we have mass upon arriving. It is an excellent way end to the day. On the second day, we start with mass, and on the Assumption, we walk together to the big feast day mass at the Shrine! It is beautiful to be where Mary stepped foot in America!

We usually have 1-2 priests who walk with us. They will be at the end of the line and women just pop back for confession and spiritual direction one at a time.

Can I do this?!? Just how hard is it?

I am 47 years old. I am in moderately good shape and exercise 2-3 times weekly. I do not “train” for this pilgrimage more than just walking 3-5 miles a few times a week. Everyone is different! We walk at a 3-mile/hr pace. It is very relaxed and steady. We are not rushing. That being said, it is hard. We recommend worn-in shoes (just great tennis shoes are fine!) and to have good moisture-absorbing socks. I like light compression ones.

A few of our men are trained medical professionals (Pete Stokman is a cardiologist). We have people who are trained in first aid. All the men carry first aid kits. We have women in their 20’s and women in their 60’s, and I believe we’ve had a few in their 70’s. It all depends on your health.

You should NOT make this pilgrimage if you are pregnant, have serious medical conditions, or have joint issues/arthritis. There is no need to risk pushing yourself in these conditions. This is for normal, healthy (non-pregnant) women. If you are pregnant, please send us your prayer requests! We will pray for you; hopefully, you can join us someday.

Which airports are nearest to our starting point in Francis Creek, WI?

The best airports to fly into are Milwaukee (1.5 hours away) and Green Bay (40 min away). WRM does not provide transportation to and from these airports. Each pilgrim is responsible for getting to the starting destination of Francis Creek, WI. However, when women register, I send out an email to all the women flying in and they can reach out to others to share transportation to the check-in destination.