



from

**Beautiful Painted Arrow
Seeds of Peace newsletter
Issue 3 January 2016**

The Sacred Act of Walking

By Rick Cotroneo of the House of Mica Peace Chamber

If we are “*breath, matter and movement*” then walking – one of our most basic forms of movement – must be a sacred act of God’s unfolding. One of my most treasured practices is an annual pilgrimage. As with many of the best things in my life, I learned about the value of walking from Beautiful Painted Arrow, Joseph Rael.

In Northern New Mexico there is a tradition of walking to this sacred spot, the Santuario De Chimayo, on Good Friday. Thousands of people from distant parts of New Mexico (and from around the world) make an annual pilgrimage to Chimayo around Easter time.

As a child, Joseph walked the 30 miles from Picuris Pueblo to Chimayo. As an adult, he would walk from his home in Bernalillo, New Mexico to Chimayo – a distance of about 75 miles! It took several days of course. One of the songs included in the 12 CD set titled *Sacred Sounds* is called “*Walking to Chimayo*”. This is a song that Joseph would sing while walking. If you have the CDs, check it out!

Over the years, I have done the pilgrimage to Chimayo several times. It is always very inspiring to be one of thousands of people to participate in this pilgrimage. I have seen people make this pilgrimage on crutches, people walking for the benefit of ill family members, people carrying crosses the entire distance and parents praying together with their small children for the entire walk.

Closer to home, here at the House of Mica a small group of us pilgrimage each year to a local sacred site, such as the Grafton Peace Pagoda, or the Shrine to Mary in New Lebanon, New York, or to a sacred site in the Adirondack mountains.

The practice of pilgrimage can be found worldwide, in every spiritual tradition. So what is it about walking that makes it so sacred? Let’s explore the sounds in the English word, “**w-a-ik**”. The first sound, the sound of “**w**” is the metaphor for “*two forms of descending light*”. When we walk, we use two legs. We plant one and then the other. In perceptual reality, we live in duality. But within that duality we have a split of a second between steps, where duality disappears and we visit this balanced state of one-ness. But mostly in this place, we swing between the extremes of duality – right and left, light and dark, birth and death. Moving in duality and traversing split seconds of balance / unity, serves to purify us. This is the letter “**a**”. The letter “**l**” has to do with ascending light. When we walk the process of purification helps to inspire upward motion, ascending light. Walking raises energy. We often feel more energetic, more alive after walking or running. Inspiration comes through. We are lighter, more buoyant. The “**k**” of walking refers to the process of planting. As we walk, we become lighter and ascend but with each step we are also planting something into the earth. After a Sun-Moon Dance you can see the tracks that dancers planted into the earth. What are we planting? With each step we plant the awareness that God is here, in this moment, in this place.

Joseph published a short book many years ago about walking. He said that walking is “*Ta-chi-who*” and he referred to this as “*God is walking here*”. “*Ta*” is the sound of the first foot hitting the earth, “*chi*” is the sound of our legs brushing against each other, and “*who*” is the sound of the second foot hitting the earth. Check it out for yourself.

To put this all together: when we walk, we become the metaphors of “*two forms of light washing and purifying consciousness*”. We become “*ascending light*” and we “*plant the awareness that right here, right now, God is walking*”. Walking is holistic health in action. As we walk, we clear the mind, heal the body, and come to a deep understanding that right here, right now, God is walking.

At the House of Mica Peace Chamber, we encourage dancers to walk as a form of preparation for the Sun-Moon Dance. I encourage all of the peace chambers and dance communities to include walking among your spiritual practices. The Spring time is a really wonderful time to take a pilgrimage, to walk to a sacred site. By doing this we honor “**walking**” and also keep alive the principle idea of pilgrimage as well as the lessons Joseph was sharing with us all those years that he walked to Chimayo during Easter week.

2020 additions to the article by editor Stella Longland



The Church at Chimayo

photo from Sylvia Roberts

During the 1980s Joseph recorded many cassette tapes for his students. Rick Cotroneo, with Joseph’s blessing, remastered these tapes and in 2006 the complete set, called *Sacred Sounds*, was first made available from the House of Mica as a set of 12 cds.

The Sacred Sounds can be purchased via download. The collection includes Joseph Rael, Beautiful Painted Arrow singing sacred sounds, chants, songs and teachings. You will find more details on:

<http://www.houseofmica.org/products.html>