

*I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" Psalm 122.1*

For most of my life, I have lived in small rural or suburban communities. Because I have, I have often been mesmerized by the awe and grandeur of large cities. A recent breathtaking moment for me a few years back was when my family was traveling to visit Niagara Falls. As our truck bounced up and down over the New York hills, the skyline of Buffalo, New York rose on the horizon. The original "Gateway to the West," in all its splendor. When our pathway finally led us into the heart of the city, there was warmth and reassurance of being lost and found in the protection of Buffalo's large business buildings.

I assume for those living in ancient Israel and Palestine, who when they made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem, there was a similar gladness in setting eyes on the grandeur of that city. I imagine the peace they would have felt in the welcoming sight of their journey's end. Their rescue into the heart of Jerusalem and their true home, *the house of the Lord!*

When the faithful go on a pilgrimage, it is often out of spiritual necessity. Sometimes it is out of spiritual requirement. At other times there is no choice, and the journey is forced upon us. No matter reason for pilgrimage, the expectation is that upon the journey's completion, one's life will be new and different.

COVID-19 is a forced pilgrimage. But we have the power in Jesus Christ to convert this pilgrimage forced upon us into a journey to the house of our Lord. To reconsider our lives and the way that we live as God's new creation in our community and in the sure and certain hope of the Kingdom of God.

My friends, how can you use this current pilgrimage to journey deeper into the house of the Lord?