

# THE HARVESTER

Dan & Heather Litchfield serving with Thrive Maine

*“Yo soy el camino, la verdad, y la vida.” These are Jesus’ words carved in Spanish and hanging on the stone siding, welcoming the more than 1,000 pilgrims that pass by La Fuente del Peregrino hostel daily. I stood across from them, praying for the pilgrims who came through that they might come to know the One who is the way, the truth, and the life.*

## Following “the Way”

This month our family met up with our Thrive New Mexico team in northwest Spain to hike the famous Camino de Santiago and then spend a week serving fellow pilgrims at a hostel on the route. Partnering with the international Christian organization, Agape, which owns the house that we volunteered at, we had the privilege of welcoming hundreds of sojourners from around the world every day and of caring specifically for the 42 that stayed overnight during the week of our service. By day we’d encourage weary hikers, offering snacks, drinks, clean bathrooms, and a shady respite from the daunting heat. Often pilgrims would linger, opening opportunities to discuss faith and share the Gospel or pray over them. At night we showed an evangelistic movie and prepared family-style meals for guests. After dinner we would invite everyone to choose “Solarium” cards with random photos on them to depict answers to questions about their experience on the trail and their view of God. These naturally built deeper relationships and led into a presentation of the Gospel.



At night we'd set breakfast on the table for the early risers, writing a personal postcard for each guest and leaving it by their place setting. The hikers cherished these postcards. One pilgrim, James, stopped by to show us the postcard he carried with him from three years ago when he last did the Camino and stayed at the house! This time he had brought a friend who was grieving the loss of her father, and James insisted that she stop at the house because we could do something to help her. We wrapped around her and prayed for her as she cried. James exalted, "See?! I told you they could help!"

Pilgrims were super grateful for our friendship and hospitality, but we were disappointed to find wide-spread apathy about spirituality- it was like Maine but on a worldwide scale. Many were hiking for the exercise, others for the challenge and adventure. Most were intent on "finding themselves," not on finding God. But for those who had been walking all the way from France, or even beyond, no matter what their initial reasons, they had discovered a sense of the spiritual. They spoke openly of the unique "energy" of our group (which we explained was the presence of the Holy Spirit) and were open to whatever "the universe" had in store for them (which we pointed out was God's desire for them to know Him.) We tend to value fruit more than seeds, but this was definitely a seed-planting time. We had so many spiritual conversations and loved on so many people each day, it is impossible to number. And there were many important small steps taken toward Christ- and God willing, many more that we don't know of. Please pray that God would fan the flame and that many who heard the Word would put their faith in Him.

## Global Encounters

During our week of hiking, we met Brad from Oregon on the trail. Suffering from a strained Achilles, we gave him my bottle of Advil and prayed for him. Though he grew up Presbyterian, he was now dabbling in pantheism, thinking God might even be found in inanimate objects, or perhaps that God did not care about people at all. We shared John 14:6 and Dan explained what it meant to be an image bearer of God and how that sets us apart from everything else in the universe and assures us of God's personal care.

Later, I walked with Paula from Argentina, who was an astrologist. She got divorced at 27 with three kids and was seeking help and answers when an astrologist "opened her mind" to understand why she was in that circumstance, so she began studying the stars for more answers and now she leads others to do the same. If only a Christian had been in her life then!

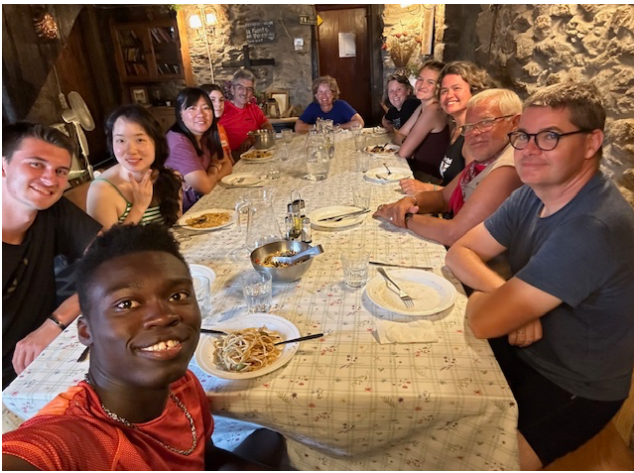


**Tiny ancient churches dot the Camino**



**Making new friends from Spain as we hike**





## A Seat at the Table

One evening our seven guests were from Slovakia, Germany, Brazil, Italy, Taiwan, and China. Massimo had done the Camino 9 times and was now with his 14 year old granddaughter. Miro, a professor, had walked four months from his house in Slovakia. Miranda, whose Hong Kong family was atheist, explained that being in Europe for the first time and going into all the ancient churches on the trail was her only real experience of spirituality. She said that she felt so safe in those churches, like there was complete peace. When I shared about Jesus, tears ran down her face. She did not profess faith at that moment but she thanked us again and again, leaving with a Gospel handout in Chinese. It was so hard to say good-bye to these fascinating people that we'd shared our lives with, knowing we might never see them again. I pray that these seeds will produce fruit and one day we will reconnect in Heaven.

Another night we hosted Jose-Antonio from Madrid who had hiked the Camino eleven times as he sought to cope with PTSD after serving in the Spanish military for twenty-five years and being in combat in Afganistan and Iraq. He cried all through watching "Courageous" and confessed to believing in Jesus.



The guys on our team pose with house guests



Pilgrims show the "answers" they chose to Soularium questions



Micah leads our team in morning devotions





Stephanie, from Barcelona, was a believer who came to faith through an angelic encounter with Christ as she was considering suicide due to a debilitating disease. Now she hikes and works as a journalist, sharing Christ with others who suffer from disease. Praying with her brought us both to tears. In fact, we were mutually encouraged by every Christ-follower that came through. As John, a pilgrim from Australia put it, believers truly feel like family. By far the majority of Christians, though, were from the U.S. Wow! Praise God!

Danny road his bike from his home in Italy to Spain, joining us for a round of soccer in the yard and a night at the house. Rolling a cigarette while we presented the Soularium cards after dinner, he explained, "I experience spirituality through occasions like this on the Camino. Such community is so complete, so *pure*," he emphasized, gesturing to the group. Many people are seeking what God alone can provide but don't realize that it is Him. Danny hungered for purity and sensed the presence of God amidst His followers, stating how different this was from all his other nights on the trail. I pray that he understood the Good News that we shared, saw that God made the difference, and that he will put his faith in Jesus.

On our last day, a young Romanian girl named Andreas stopped at the house. Our conversation quickly turned to God. Through heart-wrenching sobs, she shared her long history of abuse at the hands of her step-dad. She was angry at God but really wanted to believe. But she felt so abandoned, and that God must be cruel to let evil reign and to not protect her when she cried out to Him. She said God owed her. I tried to explain the result of sin and assure her that this was not the work of God, rather, that God is good and loves her, but her experience taught her that God did not care. In the end, I just held her as she sobbed. I prayed over her and held her face and told her not to believe the lies of the enemy who would want her to feel dirty and disregarded. I stared into her eyes and told her the truth: she was beautiful and valuable. My heart is still torn for her. Please pray with me that God will reveal Himself to her and assuage her doubts and protect her, and that she would find hope in Him.

- Pray for others to join the mission trip to the Dominican Republic in November. We need to finalize our team by July 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Pray for our interns and volunteers to gain valuable ministry experience this summer
- Pray for the marriage retreat July 11-13. We'll be canoeing the St. Croix
- Pray for the Women's rest and renewal retreat July 25-27, kayaking to Great Cranberry Island
- Whitewater rafting training is July 27-Aug 2. We are training 7 new guides for the ministry!
- Emma's mission trip to Asia July 13-31. I am a proud and praying Mama!