

Dear Friends,

I have returned safely and rejuvenated from a great Northwest road trip. I had a wonderful time visiting friends and soaking up the beautiful scenery on my way. I got to visit Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. Although I had been to these parks long ago, it was a new experience to see them now and to enjoy the beauty with my friend Fr. Marcos. I was able to stay with him for a week and enjoy the rural life of his parishes in southwest Idaho. One of his churches is in Lava Hot Springs. We went to dinner there one evening and then soaked in the hot springs for about an hour. I slept quite well that night. I also was able to help him with the Masses on the weekend and meet the folks at a couple of his churches.

Spending time with him was a blessing, as was the time on the road. As I think about being on the road, it usually entails traffic around here and therefore it's not too attractive. I have avoided being on the road lately and perhaps had the least amount of miles logged since getting my license, as this last year I drove less than 10,000 miles. This is in contrast to my first year of priesthood when I was in Lewis Co. I logged over 35,000 miles. I have always enjoyed road trips. The long stretches of road and the peace of the silence with the beautiful scenery was refreshing.

I was reminded of the pioneers and the strenuous time they would have had in traveling from place to place on horseback or on foot. I was especially impressed as I visited the grave of Fr. Ravalli in Montana, and then as I arrived in Soda Springs, ID, there was a memorial of Fr. De Smet outside of the parish. He was leading the first delegation that passed through there. He was on his way north to Montana and there was a large group of settlers that joined him looking for a way out to the Oregon Territory. Fr. De Smet was remarkable in his missionary work. The natives had great respect for him and called him the "white man whose tongue does not lie." At the end of his life, he was a mediator between the Indians and the American government and worked with Chief Sitting Bull to agree to a peace treaty. Fr. De Smet brought Jesus to the native people and they were grateful. It was this that led him in all that he did, and he logged many thousands of miles for the spread of the Gospel. He is perhaps the most well-traveled American Catholic missionary in history.

As I drive, I like to pray the rosary. On the long stretches of road, it lends to a great opportunity to ponder the mysteries of Jesus' life and passes the time quickly. In traffic, it helps me to keep patient and relaxed. I imagine that the missionaries of the frontier like Fr. De Smet had a way of meditating on their journeys. In all they did, they sought to share the gift of the Joy of the Gospel, the salvation of Christ, with those who did not know Him. We have a similar task. Many in our day have heard of Jesus, yet do not know Him. Perhaps it's harder in this context to share the Good News with a people who have already been inoculated to it by the society and culture. Yet, there is still a longing that each person has to know Jesus and to experience that peace that only He can bring to our lives. As we journey from place to place, may we always be attentive to the opportunities to share the Good News and to be instruments of Christ's peace in the world.

In Jesus love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Jack D. Shrum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Fr. Jack D. Shrum
Pastor