

PILGRIMS OF HOPE

Program of spiritual formation
of Ukrainian youth for the Jubilee Year



4. GUIDE



Meeting 1:
January 2025

1. Courage

Pilgrimage and Confession of Faith



1.1 Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
O Heavenly King. The Lord's Prayer. Hail Mary.



1.2 Patron Saint

Saint Joan of Arc

Saint Joan of Arc was a simple girl from France who showed courage, changing the course of history. At the age of 13, she heard the voices of saints urging her to defend her country. She believed that God had called her to lead the army, even though it was extremely risky for a young girl.

Joan appealed to the king, convincing him to entrust her with the command of the French troops. With incredible courage, she led the soldiers in battle, liberating Orléans and restoring the faith of her people. However, her mission met resistance – she was captured by her enemies and accused of heresy.

Even before the trial and the threat of death, Joan remained firm in her faith. She died at the stake, but she did not renounce God's calling. Her example inspires young people to always be brave, follow their faith and fight for the truth. Joan was canonized and is now a symbol of courage and faith.



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1.3 God's Word

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot slip – he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The LORD watches over you – the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.
The LORD will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life;
the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Reflections:

There are many texts in the Bible that refer to pilgrimage, because among the holidays of Israel there were three obligatory pilgrimages for all families and tribes (more precisely, obligatory for adult men): pilgrimage on the Feast of Tabernacles, on Passover and on Pentecost. These are three journeys that involved "climbing" the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Even the small family of Jesus from Nazareth, according to the Gospel of Luke, went to Jerusalem for Easter, and in the Gospel of John it is written that Jesus participated in all three of these pilgrimages.

The Psalm 121 is the second of the fifteen Psalms of "ascending steps" or "ascending songs", choral chants that accompanied the pilgrims on the difficult journey on foot to the holy city, located at an altitude of about 800 meters. Already in the first line, the psalmist calls for God's help, because only from Him can courage come to embark on a difficult and sometimes dangerous path.

Why ascend to Jerusalem? Isn't it easier to stay in your homes and villages? Pilgrimage – any pilgrimage – expresses a deep desire that lives in every heart: the desire to move, to change, to set out on a journey in order to discover many things along the way that relate to one's own life and the lives of others.



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1.3 God's Word

Reflections:

Today, in many parts of the world, and not only in Japan, where this phenomenon originated, there are young people who are called hikikomori. They withdraw into themselves, never leave the house, avoid social contacts, school and work. Recent studies suggest hundreds of thousands of hikikomori in Italy. Without judging those who go through such difficulties, and imagining the pain of these young people and their families, we can assume that they lack courage above all: the courage to face life with all its contradictions and leave their comfort zone.

It is easier and more pleasant to stay in your comfort zone, but going outside is frightening and challenging. Pilgrims who decide to leave their home for a certain time to go to Jerusalem (or, today, to another place of pilgrimage), accept difficulties and surprises, and support themselves by trusting in God, who will protect them from any danger.

With his help, as the Psalm says, God will support the traveler, protect him from falls, from sunstroke, or even from moonlight, which was then considered so harmful that it could make a person a "sleepwalker."

Leaving home also means having the courage to leave your parents and family to find your own way. It is interesting that the Jewish sages interpreted the first verse of the Psalm ("I lift up my eyes to the mountains") as a play on words between harim (mountains) and horim (fathers): "Rabbi Shmuel said: 'I lift up my eyes to the mountains,' that is, to my parents, who raised and gave birth to me."

The Psalm tells us that parents must at some point allow their children to go on their journey, on their pilgrimage. Rather, the God of Israel assumes the role of a true companion on the road, a friend who "stands at your right hand" and from whom help will come.



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1.4 Subject block

Courage is a life-giving breath, an impulse before the start of a race; it is the force that the starter leaves in the legs a moment before the start. To dare means to act with the heart, to take the first step on the path, because it means to go forward, throwing your heart behind an obstacle, allowing your desire to guide you, and with it – your gaze.

Courage is an attitude about perspective, about the reason you set out on your journey. It is related to the motives that drive your life.

Pilgrimage is the best metaphor for change: you go on a journey because you want to change your original position, because you want to see yourself in a different way. And in order to rethink yourself in relation to yourself and others, you need courage. You do it when you realize that the position you are in no longer satisfies you, it is not enough for you.



1.5 Personal reflections

- When did you feel like you were acting with your heart?
- Has there been a path in your life that changed your perception of yourself and others?
- In this period of your life, what are your desires, and what motives give rise to them?
- In what situation, place, or relationship do you feel you need to show courage?
- If the going gets tough, do you give up or do you persist no matter what?
- Have you met bright examples of courage in your life that became a signpost for you?



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1.6 Work in groups

Purpose: To help young people realize the value of courage and trust in God in difficult situations through group work and interactive activities.

Step 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

1. Welcome: The group leader welcomes the participants and explains the topic and purpose of the meeting.
 - We consider the story of David and Goliath and try to find in it lessons for ourselves and parallels with modern times.
2. Reading a passage from the Holy Scriptures: Read together the passage about the battle between David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17:1-51, translated by Khomenko).
 - You can invite one of the participants to read the passage aloud.

Step 2. Discussion in small groups (10 minutes)

1. Division into groups: Participants are divided into small groups of 4-6 people.
2. Questions for discussion:
 - Who is an example of courage for you? Share stories about people who inspire you.
 - Parallels with modern times: How does David's situation resemble the struggle of Ukraine (against Russia) for freedom? What lessons can we learn from this story?
 - What impresses you about this passage? What traits of David would you like to develop in yourself?
3. Writing down ideas: Assign one "secretary" in each group to write down the main ideas.

Step 3. Activity: "Stone of David" (10 minutes)

Purpose: To show how each person has "weapons" (prayer, God's Word, talents, faith, character traits) to overcome difficulties, as David had his stone against Goliath.



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1.6 Work in groups



Instruction:

1. Materials:

- Small cards or pieces of paper (one for each participant).
- Markers or pens.
- Basket, box or symbolic "David's bag" for collecting "stones".

2. Process:

- Give each participant a card.
- Suggest that they write on the card a "stone" that they consider to be their special gift or character trait that helps them overcome difficulties (for example, prayer, God's Word, faith, patience, courage, kindness, understanding, complete trust in God).
- Everyone takes turns placing their "stone" in the bag, saying, "My stone is [name of quality or gift], and I use it to overcome [name of obstacle, such as fear, doubt, indifference]."

3. Team action:

- After everyone puts their "stones" in the bag, the leader announces: "These are our stones of courage! Together we can defeat any Goliath!"
- The bag is symbolically held up as a sign of the collective strength of the group.

4. Discussion:

- How did you feel when choosing your "stone"?
- How did you feel when you saw that all participants made their contribution?
- How can we support each other in difficult situations?

Step 4. Summary and reflection (5 minutes)

1. Exchange of ideas: Each group briefly presents its conclusions from the discussion (1-2 minutes per group).

2. Reflection:

- What new did you learn about courage?
- How can you apply this lesson in your life?



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1.7 Testimony

#pilgrimsofhope
#jubileeofyouth
#thejubileeyear2025

We encourage young people to post the hashtags during the month:
#pilgrimsofhope #jubileeofyouth #thejubileeyear2025

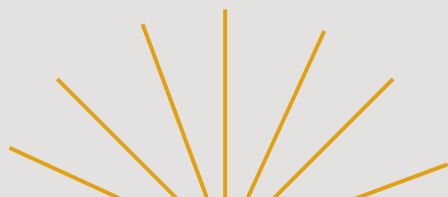
1. Tell your relatives: Share your thoughts and impressions with loved ones. Tell us how the story of David and Goliath inspired you.
2. Post on social media: Think about who is your example of courage today and post about it on social media. Add a few words about how their example supports you in life.
3. Think about it: who is an example of courage for you today? Are you ready to be such an example for others?



1.8 Final prayer

Completion of spiritual work, prayer of choice: Jesus prayer / Rosary / Thesis / Prayer in silence.

This is the time to trust God with your experiences, to thank God for the gift of courage and daring, and to ask for strength to overcome life's trials.



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Books:

Annex:

"The Chronicles of Narnia" – Clive Staples Lewis

A series of seven books where the characters, falling into the fantasy world of Narnia, learn courage, self-sacrifice and faith while fighting evil.

"The Last Pilgrim" – Sigrid Undset

A novel about a medieval knight who searches for the meaning of life, finding it in faith and the courage to follow his convictions.

"The Fisherman's Ring" – Jean Raspail

The story of a secret Pope who, despite persecution, remains faithful to his mission, showing courage and resilience.

"Quo Vadis" – Henryk Sienkiewicz

A novel describing the early Christians in Rome, their courage and willingness to defend their faith in the face of danger.

"The Lord of the Rings" – John Ronald Reuel Tolkien

An epic trilogy where the heroes show incredible courage and self-sacrifice in the fight against evil, with hidden Christian motives.



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Movies:

Annex:

"The Ninth Day" (2004)

A historical drama about a Catholic priest imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp, who faces moral dilemmas and shows courage in his faith.

"A Man for All Time" (1966)

The film tells the story of Sir Thomas More, who defends his religious beliefs in the face of King Henry VIII, showing courage and principle.

"Hidden Life" (2019)

A biographical drama about Franz Jägerstätter, an Austrian farmer who refused to swear allegiance to Hitler, showing the courage to follow his conscience.

"God's Not Dead" (2014)

Student Josh Wheaton defends his belief in God against an atheist professor. His courage inspires to trust God even in difficult circumstances.

"Fireproof" (2008)

The story of a firefighter who, saving his marriage, discovers the power of faith and the courage to change his life for the better.

"Hacksaw Ridge" (2016)

Desmond Doss, refusing to take up arms because of his faith, saves dozens of lives in the war, showing courage and loyalty to principles.

"The Shack" (2017)

A drama about a man who, after a family tragedy, meets God, finding the courage to forgive and heal.

