

# Walking in Faith: My first Pilgrimage to Walsingham.

*By Kingsley C. Ngonye*

It was my first pilgrimage to Walsingham, and I honestly didn't know what to expect, but it turned out to be one of the most beautiful and moving experiences of my life.

The day started with the sun shining warmly, as if nature itself was joining in our celebration. As St. Francis of Assisi once praised in the Canticle of the Sun, *"Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures, especially Brother Sun, who is the day through whom You give us light. And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour; and bears a likeness of You, Most High One."* The bright sunshine and gentle breeze truly felt like a blessing, reminding me of God's presence in all creation.

The Mass at the Basilica was incredible: we heard the word of God in every breath and sacrament with Jesus in the bread and wine broken for us. It was made even more special by the open access, with people gathered both inside and outside the church, united in prayer and song. Being part of such a welcoming and prayerful community made me feel embraced and deeply connected to everyone there.

As we set off on the Holy Mile, the walk began with a gentle sprinkle of water (Asperges), a simple yet powerful blessing that felt like a fresh start for our pilgrimage. As we moved together, we prayed especially the Hail Mary aloud, some walked in silence, and I found myself soaking in the stunning scenery around us. The gentle wind, the bright sunlight, the peaceful countryside all felt like a gift. Then, seeing the statue of Our Beloved Mother being carried just ahead, guiding us softly forward, filled me with comfort and hope. It felt like she was walking alongside each one of us, watching over us on our journey.

When we reached the ruins of Walsingham Abbey, I was in awe at the rich history of this sacred place. Hearing about the centuries of pilgrims who had walked these paths before us and about the trials the Abbey had faced gave me a deep sense of reverence and awe. I felt part of something much bigger than myself, connected across time and faith.

One of the most beautiful parts of the day was the friendships I made. Meeting other young adults, speaking with priests from different parishes, sharing smiles and stories, it felt like we had become one big family, united by faith and love.

Our pilgrimage ended with Vespers and Benediction, led by Bishop Alan. Watching him lead us in prayer, feeling the solemnity and peace of the moment, I was overwhelmed by a sense of God's presence. It was a moment of grace that seemed to hold all our prayers, all our journeys and hope in his divine, gentle, powerful and real embrace.

I came away feeling spiritually renewed, filled with hope and gratitude. This pilgrimage wasn't just a walk or a service, it was a journey of the heart.

My advice? If you ever have the chance to take part in a pilgrimage like this, don't hesitate. Open your heart, step forward, and let the journey change you. It's an experience that stays with you forever, bringing you closer to your faith, to your community, and yourself.

And remember this promise from Leviticus 26:12-15:

"I will walk with you — I will be your God, and you will be my people."