

**LIPSCOMB IN THE WORLD**

**TED PARKS TAKES THE PILGRIM’S PATH**

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR WALKS THE WAY OF ST. JAMES TO DEVELOP ENLIGHTENING PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS**

**SOMETIMES IT TAKES A JOURNEY TO FIND THE RIGHT PATH.**

That’s what Associate Professor of Spanish **Ted Parks** ('78) believes, and for the past two summers he has been on a journey to develop an inspirational, culturally insightful opportunity for students to help them discover their own successful paths in their spiritual and professional lives.

Along with Professor of History **Richard Goode**, Parks has spent two summers walking portions of the Camino de Santiago – The Way of Saint James – a 500-mile trail that follows a medieval pilgrimage route across Spain to Santiago. In the summer of 2016, Parks walked with friend and colleague Richard Goode, Lipscomb professor of history. Last summer, he walked alone.

Parks hiked most of the route in an effort to develop a future global learning course for Lipscomb. The course will focus on vocation—not in the sense of “What do I do?” but of “Who am I?”—while searching for God’s spiritual direction through historical practices and spiritual disciplines.

“Because undergraduates are at a time in life where they are trying to discern where to go from here, we tend to equate ‘vocation’ with profession,” said Parks. “But for me as a Christian, vocation is so much broader. It comes from Latin for ‘calling,’ and the Camino offers a great opportunity to think about who you really are and how do you live into the person God has already made me to be.”

There are examples in the Bible of people of faith, such

as Abraham, called to travel from one place to another in search of God’s will, said Parks,

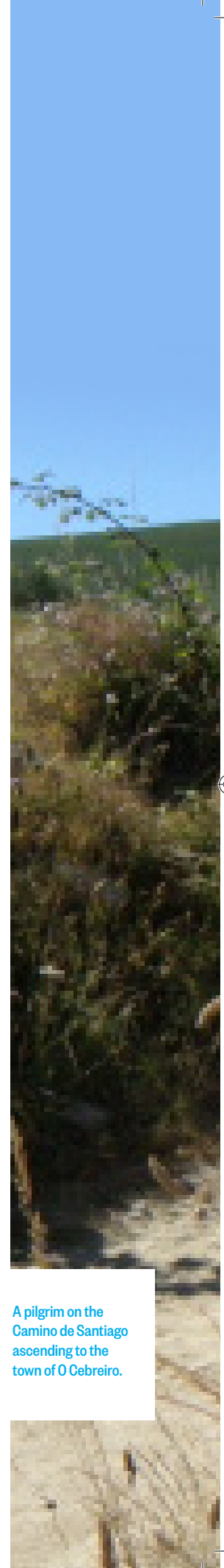
The 14-year professor in the English and Modern Languages Department has long been a leader in cultural and social activities to help students broaden their perspectives, such as coordinating the film series HumanDocs, focused on social justice issues; coordinating a home-stay study abroad program in Oviedo, Spain; and spearheading events to promote diversity on campus. This latest project combines his interests in the Spanish language, cultural diversity and spiritual development to benefit students.

The Camino de Santiago was one of the three great medieval European pilgrimage routes, said Parks. Christian tradition holds that the remains of St. James, the apostle, ended up in northwestern Spain. Christians have travelled to Santiago de Compostela for 1,000 years to ask God’s favor at the cathedral that tradition holds as a sacred place, Parks said.

In 2018 the official Camino de Santiago has various paths, but the most popular route is the Camino Frances (The French Way), which begins in Saint Jean Pied de Port, on the French side of the Pyrenees Mountains and crosses northeastern Spain. The entire route takes about six weeks to walk, Parks said.

Today people from all over the world travel the Camino, some as a spiritual discipline, some for personal development (as many in America hike the Appalachian Trail or the Pacific Crest Trail (featured in the book Wild); and some for recreation.

A pilgrim on the Camino de Santiago ascending to the town of O Cebreiro.



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## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT



(Above) Parks (left) along with a fellow pilgrim from Australia, and other scenes from the Camino de Santiago.



## IT'S A CLARIFYING EXPERIENCE TO WALK AND THINK AT THE SAME TIME.

But this is no wilderness hike, Parks said. There are plenty of restaurants and hotels along the way, along with natural scenery and medieval sites. Much of the walk is through rural areas—often even between cow-filled fields on private farms, he said. The official Camino accommodations are called albergues and are like hostels with cheap rooms and communal living.

On a typical day on the Camino, Parks left early to get an hour or so of walking in before stopping for breakfast, then continued walking until early afternoon. By then he would have reached the end of that day's "stage," marked sections that divide up the Camino route. He would eat lunch in the late afternoon (as they do in Spain), visit with his fellow hikers, get to know the town where he stopped and go to bed early.

Walking the Camino "creates a rhythm for your days," said

Parks. "It's a rhythm that is not a product of your own design, but something for you to fit into. It reminds me of an ordered monastic life,"

During his 2017 hike, Parks read a devotional guide specifically written and compiled by a Franciscan community to make the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage more meaningful. The guide included identity-focused Bible readings, quotes and questions to reflect on as he walked.

"There is something about walking and thinking like that, that is different from just sitting down to think," he said. "It's a clarifying experience to walk and think at the same time. It keeps me from getting into a closed loop in my thinking."

At various points on the trail, he and Goode noticed that the path seemed to be sunken into the ground around it. The two couldn't help but wonder if it was the feet of 1,000 years of Christian pilgrims that had worn the path down into the earth, Parks said.

"You can't ignore the thousands of Christians before you and the realization that you are just one person in a long stream of people," he said. "All those people understood God differently, but they were all still searching for God. And now here you are, looking for God's presence as well and trying to live your life in it."

