

REFLECTION

The Road Less Traveled

by Guillermo de Carndonagh

Some time back a friend asked me to consider undertaking a job entailing some very serious responsibilities. Not wanting to shun a task where I could make a positive contribution, but also not wishing to undertake something whose obligations I could not fulfill effectively; I sought the advice of a wise man who knows my family and me.

In the pre-dawn I started south on a high speed expressway. With a few route changes and jiggle here and there the road, by noon brought me tired and worn, to his hill top rectory in a small Pennsylvania coal town. After a filling lunch, some prayer in the church, and a few hours of good conversation and useful advice I was ready to return home. We said goodbye in front of the little church with the Icon of Holy Wisdom over the door, and I descended the long steep stone steps to the street below. Across the Valley I could see the crowded north-south expressway with the rushing cars and trucks. In the still mountain air one could hear the distant highway's hum. The thing seemed oddly repellent after the peaceful and peace giving hours I had just spent.

In my mind's eye was a route that cut diagonally across the mountains towards my home to the north west. A road less traveled in these days of high speed four lanes but one which would take me home. Retrieving the map pouch from the trunk, making a few notes with pen on pad; and the first leg of the journey was mapped out. Soon the car was committed to the tree enfolded mountain two lane road. Several hours later; having followed the old sign posts and passed through a number of villages the cross roads that marked end of the first stretch was reached. An inviting family restaurant, once a busy hostel, still serves the local people and provided a warm and savory meal.

From this point one road joins the east-west branch of the expressway system with all its hustle bustle. But instead, after some studying of the maps, I committed again to the peaceful two lanes crossing the river and the expressway on an old bridge. The road was soon surrounded by the lush hills that mark each side of the lake filled valleys leading home. Upon arriving home I discovered that the return trip had taken no longer than the outbound and that I was much less worn by the drive.

In retrospect life as a Christian seems rather like this trip; we can rush, with the crowd, through life ignoring all the beauty around us and struggling to stay out of harm's way. Alternatively, we can follow the well worn paths of those who have gone before us; consulting their maps for guidance and savoring the things they savored. Both paths may take us to our destination but only one brings us there peacefully. A true Christian is not caught up in a frenetic pursuit of change, novelty and efficiency. Rather a true Christian life is built consciously upon the paths set down by our forebearers. Paths that allow us to experience the beauty of God's creation, a sense of unity with our predecessors, and a peace of heart for ourselves.