



Leverage from
the EU
2014–2020



PILGRIMAGE

Main story: Oliver and the treasure

Oliver Kossler, a young man, has travelled to Finland from afar. He has walked long distances gradually towards the north. On his travels, he has heard stories about a treasure hidden in the north.

He has eavesdropped on two travellers who were talking about a treasure that you can find if you go from one holy place to the next collecting information on the way.

As the night falls, Oliver steals a list of the destinations from the two travellers. He is surprised to find many other pilgrims travelling the same route and, gradually, he begins to wonder whether there is a worldly treasure at all. He feels cheated but keeps on going and carefully listens to all the stories he hears.

Some stories take him far back in time, and there is great food for thought in them all. Many destinations touch him.

Some people think he is not a real pilgrim, others see him as just starting his journey. But he goes on, persistently, and completes the tasks given to him.

Hämeenlinna Church: "The city is on fire"

Osmo, the sexton of the Church of Hämeenlinna, is in the sacristy when he hears someone crying. He finds a little boy in the church, sobbing,

"The city is on fire!" a clear voice echoes around the amphitheatre-style nave of the church.

"Who is it hiding here?" Osmo asks gently.

"It's just me, Johan Sibelius, or Janne as everyone knows me."

Osmo takes the boy to the window. The city outside is quiet and the Kirkkopuisto Park is blazing with autumn colours.

"Please calm down now and tell me why you are in such a panic!"

"I was fishing at the Vanajavesi lake and my fishing mate told me about the city fire that happened over thirty years ago. Almost the entire city burnt down, and only the church survived. I don't know if it was my imagination or if I fell asleep, it felt so real! I ran to the church to be safe."

Janne's eyes brighten up as he looks around.

"Here, in the Pantheon of the north, you can almost feel like you are in Rome!"

The organist has climbed on the organ loft and begins to play the clear tone of the oboe organ stop. Closing his eyes, Janne lies down on the church pew.

The dream of the future virtuoso composer is visible in his expression: "I want to be able to create such beauty too!"

Renko church: Church of St James the Great



Leverage from
the EU
2014–2020



The pilgrim is wearing a faded robe, worn-out shoes and carrying only a tiny bag and his cane. He stands at the door of the church for a long time before entering the Church of St James the Great. He nods his head, makes the sign of the cross over his chest and seats himself quietly on the back pew.

Only his lips move slightly as he utters the Prayer of St James:

“O Sovereign Lord, who hast visited us in compassion and mercies, and hast freely given to us, Thy humble and sinful and unworthy servants, boldness to stand at Thy holy altar...”

After saying the prayer, the pilgrim looks around and sees the beauty of the church, its ancient altar textiles and candlesticks, the pews worn out from use. The church has such a distinct shape, an octagon, and flooded with light coming in from the vast windows. He feels grateful.

He meets another pilgrim outside the church.

"Are you coming from afar? I am on a pilgrimage too," the young man says.

"Not from a faraway place, but a faraway time. Go in, you will find peace there," the pilgrim replies, smiling.

Hauho Church: Bartimeus

Old Bartimeus is listening to the bells tolling at the Hauho Church. The oldest one of the bells is older than he is. Of course, he is ancient himself, one of the oldest man-shaped poor boxes in Finland.

Nowadays, they let him stand indoors, but once he used to live in the churchyard. In the early 1700s, in the days of the Great Wrath, he was attacked by a group of cossacks, who hit him in the middle of the head with a sword and stole his money box. You can still see a deep cut in his head.

Bartimeus loves his own church a lot, but he has also seen the world. He has travelled around Finland in exhibitions, and once he travelled all the way to Rome in a padded plywood container! And he did not have to come back from Rome empty-handed, either: there were liras in the box!

People are starting to arrive for the service. The blind Bartimeus is standing, holding his hand out, the money box propped against his chest with his other hand. Children often want to grab his grooved hand and drop a coin into the money box. All the money Bartimeus collects is donated to the welfare services of the parish.

Vanaja Church: Old Aksel and the pulpit

Pastor Aksel, who had served the parish for almost his entire life, was walking along the external wall of the Vanaja Church and touched one of its massive corner stones. After a freezing night, the stone was still cold, even though the days were warm.

Aksel climbed to his favourite spot, the exterior pulpit of the church, a very rare construction. He had always been very happy that the pulpit had been built on the western end of the church. Once, it was used on major holidays only, when the church was fully packed. Secular, administrative announcements



Leverage from
the EU
2014–2020



were also made from the pulpit. Nowadays, it is not often used, but Aksel has enjoyed all the occasions when he has had the chance to preach to the congregation below. There is a special feeling in the church, but speaking to the congregation outdoors, especially on a beautiful summer day, is a unique feeling.

A few days later, Aksel passed away. His funeral service took place at the Vanaja Church and he was buried in its graveyard. But sometimes, on frosty autumn mornings, when the sun's rays penetrate the fog, you can see a figure that resembles Aksel in the exterior pulpit.

Hattula parish: Competitive tendering for church builders

It was just before Christmas in 1851. Erik was sitting at the inn in Mierola. He was weary after travelling from Tampere, and anxious. His bid had been carefully calculated, and 5,690 silver roubles would be a fair price for building the church. He would get some too, if he just got the deal.

Ten years had passed since the decision issued by the Senate of the Grand Duchy of Finland: a new stone church shall be built on Rahkoila Hill. The plot had been donated by Senior Lay Judge E. Puontila on the condition that he would be exempted from day work in the church building project. The design had been commissioned to Grandstedt.

After waiting for a few years, the news of his death was reported in the newspaper. The plans were finally completed by Intendant, E. B. Lohrmann. Some of the local people were against the building project. Erik thought everyone would be happy once the majestic church was completed.

The bidding on the construction project had been completed. Eric was selected. He was slightly irritated, because no-one knew him around here, and suspicions had arisen of his guarantors. Still, Erik believed that everything would fall into place, and he could start work next year.

Church of the Holy Cross, Hattula: a red-brick robe

Ingeborg was sitting in a rocky boat with the waves of Vanajavesi lake surging water to the bottom of the boat. If only there was no storm... The journey to the Church of the Holy Cross from the castle takes a while. Since her return from Sweden, Ingeborg has waited a long time to see the church. Has it been completed? Someone had explained that the walls had been decorated with paintings and wooden statues by the Master of Lieto. How exciting!

The pilgrims travelled the same waterways in their search for answers. Queen Margaret had encouraged pilgrimages to go to Hattula for the peace of her soul. Ingeborg had offered accommodation and food for the pilgrims, too.



Leverage from
the EU
2014–2020



The bow of the boat hits the sand on the shore. The air has cleared, and the sun's rays flicker on the waves. The church on the top of the hill looks imposing, like the castle's sister also dressed in a red brick robe. The altar of the church conceals a relic of the Holy Cross – how on earth did it end up there? It has been said to have miraculous power. Ingeborg walks towards the church slowly.

Tyrvöntö Church: a miracle

Vasily did not particularly want to speak about it, but if he was asked, he would tell the story. He was an educated man, and people listened, but of course there were those who doubted him. Vasily did not care, he did not completely understand what had happened himself.

It was 1838. Vasily Uschkakoff was on a trading trip, taking goods to merchants for Christmas. When he was crossing the ice-covered lakes, he was always particularly careful. But once, the worst thing happened: he fell through the ice, sinking into the blackness, to the bottom of the icy-cold lake. When he woke up, he was lying on the ice, and the cold air was nipping on his cheeks. All his goods were there beside him, and his clothes were dripping wet.

This had happened a few weeks ago. When he was returning from the Tyrvöntö Church, Vasily was thinking of the parson's words. Lindeqvist had thanked Vasily profusely for his donation, which was used to buy a tin-plated cross on the roof of the church.

Humbled, Vasily looked up once again, thankful for the protection. It had been a miracle, he was convinced. His thoughts turned to Christmas that was soon coming, and his birthday: he, too, was a child of Christmas.

Church of St Laurence: Ilmari returns

Hard work and long life were reflected in the deep furrows of the 61-year-old man's face. His movements were slow and difficult. Ilmari had wanted to come to the church once more on a Sunday.

He was sitting in the pew and thought back to 1520 when he, still a young man, had attended the consecration service of the church. Back then, he did not know that he would later receive baptism there and it would become such an important holy place for him.

Ilmari saw the marks of his own hands in the arches of the ceiling. He had also been there to build the sacristy on the north side and the armoury on the south.

Ilmari still shivered when he thought of the fate of the church builder. He had been beheaded in Hämeenlinna even before the church had been consecrated. At a time, Ilmari had been intimidated when he entered the church, and the male figure nailed to the five-foot wooden cross, had looked peculiar.

Now he knew that it was Jesus Christ.



Leverage from
the EU
2014–2020



The main story continues...

Finally, Oliver has visited all the destinations on his list. He has seen and heard so much, and he realises that he no longer feels the urge to keep travelling. He just wants to stop, be quiet and think. He is in no hurry to go anywhere, he can rest where he is, take his time, to be here and now, among the beauty and sacredness.

Oliver is approached by an old man who looks like he has something to say or ask.

"I guess you've found it, then. Your treasure."

Oliver takes a closer look at the man and realises, blushing, that he is one of the two men from whom he stole the list of the destinations.

"No, I did not", Oliver denies.

"Think again", the man says and calmly takes a seat beside Oliver.

Oliver thinks and suddenly comes to realise that maybe this was the purpose of it all.

"You are right", the man says: "We saw you yearning for peace, and that is what you found. A true treasure. Now take your time and relish it. Then, give the list to someone else who needs it, whatever way you think best."