



# International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage

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Volume 7

Issue 5 *Sacred Space, Time and New Secular Pilgrimages*

Article 6

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2019

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### Recommended Citation

Rucquoi, Adeline (2019) "The Way of Saint James: A sacred space?," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*: Vol. 7: Iss. 5, Article 6.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.21427/02ax-eb56>

Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol7/iss5/6>

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## The Way of Saint James: A sacred space?

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An increasing number of pilgrims make their way each year to the Sanctuary of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia. For many, the Way is almost more important than the goal to be achieved, that is, the tomb of the apostle. Can the space thus covered, sometimes taking weeks or months, be considered 'sacred'? Undoubtedly, the pilgrimage to Compostela unites space and time. But it adds a particular symbolic dimension to them that makes it the quest for the elsewhere, the other and the absolute. As an image of the 'pilgrimage of human life', the whole formed by the apostolic sanctuary and the path leading to it, thus, acquires a sacred character.

**Key Words:** pilgrimage, Santiago, sacred, way, Saint James

In 2018, more than 320,000 people asked for their pilgrimage to Santiago to be acknowledged and obtained their *compostela*. The vast majority of them had arrived to Santiago de Compostela on foot. Some had only walked a few days to meet the criteria set by the cathedral: at least 100 km on foot, or 200 on horseback or by bicycle. Others had travelled hundreds and thousands of kilometres taking two, three or four months to reach the goal, the sanctuary, erected in the 9<sup>th</sup> century on the remains of the apostle Saint James, brother of Saint John the Evangelist. The map of the pilgrim routes of Santiago in Europe, drawn up in October 2017, shows more than 60,000 kilometres of paths marked as such.<sup>[1]</sup> Undoubtedly, the Way of Saint James is not only a space that can be geographically understood, it is also a time, of pilgrimage, that, day after day, leads the pilgrim from their house to the end of their journey.

Space and time. Much more than some modern pilgrimage places where people go by car, train or even plane, the pilgrimage to Compostela brings together these two elements of traditional pilgrimage. Its very history, a mixture of proven facts, myths and legends, reality and miracles, gives a particular symbolic value to the path that leads to the apostolic tomb. And the time taken to travel through this space is inseparable from it.

At the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, around 830, Bishop Theodemirus found in Galicia, in his diocese of Iria, the tomb of the apostle Santiago, who, according to tradition, had been the evangeliser of Spain. This

discovery was quickly spread as it is attested in the *Martyrologes* written in Vienna, Paris and St. Gallen since the 860s. The terms in which the authors of these *Martyrologes* point out the location of the tomb reveal a common source:

... his very sacred bones, transported from Jerusalem to Spain, and buried in the last confines of it – *in Hispanias translata et in ultimis finibus condita* ... (Migne 124, 1852: c. 295; Migne 131, 1853: c.1125)

The 'last confines' of the most western land undoubtedly refer to the Scriptures:

*For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said: I have made you a light to the nations, so that my salvation may reach the remotest parts of the earth* (Acts 13:47).

James, one of the apostles, closest to Christ, the first who had been martyred for his faith, had fulfilled this command and was peacefully resting at the *finis terrae*. Going to his tomb, visiting the sanctuary erected on it, was therefore a journey to the end of the earth, which reminded the pilgrim of the apostolic experience. The world maps of that period placed Jerusalem at the centre of Creation. At the far east, usually represented at the top of the map, was the Earthly Paradise, now forbidden and closed to humans. So there remained

2. See the Mappae Mundi of the *Beatus* of San Miguel de la Escalada (926) (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Ms M. 644 fol. 33v-34r), of Saint-Sever (1060) (Paris, BNF, Lat. 8878, fol. 45bisv-45ter), of Osma (1086) (Burgo de Osma, Archivo de la catedral, Cod. 1, fol. 34v-35), of Turin or Ripoll (1100) (Turin, Biblioteca nazionale universitaria, Ms. I, II, 1, fol. 38v-39), or of Las Huelgas (1220) (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Ms M. 429, fol. 31v-32r).

1. Instituto Geográfico Nacional de España  
[<https://nco.ign.es/caminosantiago/>]

only the other end for sinners, for those who had been driven out of Paradise, in the west the church where the son of Zebedee was buried awaited them.<sup>[2]</sup>

The authors of the *sermo* XV of the first Book of the *Codex Calixtinus* affirmed three centuries later that the Church was founded on three apostles who were ‘the princes and columns of others’: Peter, James and John. They represented – *figurantur* – the three theological virtues: the faith that makes us begin, the hope that impels us to continue, and the love that is the completion of it. Since he had been chosen as head – *caput* – of the Church, Peter was at the centre, in Rome, they explained. To his right and left were Zebedee's two sons, John in the East and James in the West (Herbers and Santos Noia, 1993:79 and 81).<sup>[3]</sup> Thus was also fulfilled the request of the latter two to be seated on the right and left of the Lord in his Kingdom: ‘Allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory’ (Mk, 10:37). From Asia to the Hispanic *finis terrae* the world was now circumscribed by these three major shrines, dedicated to the three most beloved apostles of Jesus Christ. This is what Alphonse Dupront calls

*the extraordinary and fundamental triangulation of Jerusalem, Rome and Santiago de Compostela, the great itineraries of the itinerant sacral encounter* (Dupront, 1987: 30).<sup>[4]</sup>

Santiago de Compostela is therefore first of all a space, a precise spot in the far West of the world, which parallels Jerusalem, the point of origin of Christianity. But it is also a time, it is time. The time, first of all, that elapsed between the Ascension of Christ and the martyrdom of James, a time dedicated, according to the *Breviarium apostolorum*, to the evangelisation of Spain by the son of Zebedee, to his return to the Holy Land, to the conversion of the magician Hermogene and his servant Philetus, and eventually that of Josias who will share the apostle's tragic fate (Iacobi a Voragine, 1850: 295–303; Carracedo Fraga, 1998). Then the long, eight

centuries, of rest in the land of Spain following the translation of the apostolic body by his disciples into a boat which, ‘ruled by God,’ led him, with two or nine disciples, from Jaffa to Padrón in Galicia where he had to wait until the end of time (Herbers and Santos Noia, 1993:185–191). This was followed by the time of discovery, marked by marvellous phenomena – lights on a grove –, by a first revelation made to a hermit with a symbolic name, Pelagius – the name of the first Christian king after the Muslim conquest and the name of a young Christian martyr from Cordoba – and finally by the revelation of the apostolic body made to Bishop Theodemire and then to King Alfonso II the Chaste (López Ferreiro, 1900:I, 3-7).<sup>[5]</sup> This is the time of miracles, of which twenty-two are recounted in the Second Book of the *Codex Calixtinus*, miracles performed throughout the West and even in favour of a ‘Greek’ pilgrim, and miracles that continued to occur at the time of the drafting of the *Codex*, thus uniting the past and the present.

But the time *par excellence* of the pilgrimage to Compostela is the time of travel. Whether it is to go to Jerusalem, Rome or Santiago, a journey is always necessary: it will be necessary to travel through a space and therefore take time. The journey to the Holy Places of Palestine was generally made, in whole or in part, by sea. Upon their arrival, the Franciscans took charge of the pilgrims and took them on a tour of the Holy Sepulchre and the high places of holy history: Abraham's well, the house of St. Elizabeth, the stations of Christ's Passion, etc., before returning to the ship that would take them back to the starting point. The pilgrimage to Rome also included a visit to the wonders of the *Urbs* and the *Mirabilia urbis Romae* which circulated in the Middle Ages described the remains of ancient Rome and its great figures as well as the places of the martyrdom of the apostles Peter

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3. ‘Misterium etiam est maximum, quod hi tres columnae aliorum constituuntur. Per hos enim principales virtutes, scilicet fides, spes, caritas figurantur. Per Petrum fides qua incipimus, per Iacobum spes qua erigimur, per Iohannem caritas qua consumamur, intelligitur (fol. 69r). Sed nec preces matris, quibus sedem regni filii poposcerat, cassate sunt, quia ut quidam sapiens in himnidicis laudibus astruit, Iohanni Asia que est a dextera, beato vero Iacobo Hispania que est a sinistra, in divisione provinciarum contigerunt (fol. 71r).’
4. ‘La triangulation aussi extraordinaire que fondamentale de Jérusalem, Rome et Saint-Jacques de Compostelle, les grandes routes d’une itinérance de la rencontre sacrale.’

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5. ‘... divina providente clementia temporibus serenissimi regis domini Adefonsi, qui vocatur Castus, cuidam anacoritae nomine Pelagius, qui non longe a loco in quo apostolicum corpus tumulatum jacebat, degere consueverat, primitus revelatum esse angelicis oraculis dignoscitur. Deinde sacris luminaribus quampluribus fidelibus in ecclesia sancti Felicis de Lovio commorantibus ostenditur; qui inito consilio iriensem episcopum dominum Theodomirum arcesiverunt sanctam visionem illi detegentes. Qui inito triduo ieiunio, fidelium caetibus agregatis beati Iacobi sepulchrum marmoreis lapidibus contectum invenit: qui maximo gavisus gaudio religiosissimum regem praefatum vocare non distulit.’
6. *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, chap. VIII: ‘De locis que inveniuntur in sanctorum passionibus’, chap. XI: ‘De cimiteriis’.

and Paul and the burial of the saints (D'Onofrio, 1988).<sup>[6]</sup> These texts, which the pilgrims received or bought, and which they took with them, do not pay any attention to the journey that led to the city, the purpose of the pilgrimage: the described space, the holy space is that of the city, Jerusalem or Rome.

But Santiago is inseparable from the Way that leads to it. Between the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> and the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, the Compostelan sanctuary acquired a new monumental and richly decorated church and a series of texts, some of which were copied in the *Codex Calixtinus*. The 5<sup>th</sup> Book of the *Codex* is a route to the tomb of the apostle James. It follows on from the *Historia Turpini*, which attributed to Charlemagne the discovery of the sepulchre following the apparitions of Saint James and a military campaign against Muslims in Spain, a story intended to authenticate the presence of apostolic relics in Compostela against Rome, which denied it (Díaz y Díaz, 2003:99-111; López Alsina, 2003:113-129). Charlemagne's fabulous itinerary was thus proposed to pilgrims, and Book V opens with the postulation that 'Four are the routes to Santiago that meet in one at Puente la Reina, Spain'. These routes, the text says, pass through Saint-Gilles, Sainte-Marie du Puy, Sainte-Marie-Madeleine de Vézelay, and Saint-Martin de Tours. However, in the chapter devoted to 'places to be visited', only a sufficient number of sanctuaries along the roads of Saint-Gilles and Tours are mentioned so that an itinerary can be drawn up (Vielliard, 1978; Hogarth, 1992; Rucquoi, Michaud-Fréjaville and Picone, 2018: 31–71).

Published in 1882 in Paris, in Latin by Fr. Fidel Fita (Fita, 1882), then with a French translation by Jeanne Vielliard in 1938, the fifth and last book of the *Codex Calixtinus* served as a guide for French scholars who, from 1950 onwards, tried to reconstruct 'the four ways' in France. In fact, the subsequent rediscovery of Book IV, *Historia Turpini*, and its codicological study by Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz (Díaz y Díaz, 1988), followed by the publication of numerous pilgrims' accounts (Herbers and Plötz, 1999; Rucquoi, Michaud-Fréjaville & Picone, 2018), have allowed new approaches to the texts contained in the *Codex Calixtinus*. Pierre-Gilles Girault thus highlighted the fact that the starting points of the four French routes were four famous sanctuaries at the time (Girault, 2005:129-147). These were not 'starting points' since the Latin text speaks of routes 'through' – *per* – but it is indeed logical to call upon pilgrims, who have come from elsewhere and are already gathered in a place of pilgrimage, to encourage them to go to the tomb of Saint James. In order for

them to choose the land route, rather than maritime transport, they were offered the itinerary followed by Charlemagne and his army in the Fourth Book, starting from the Pyrenees (Rucquoi, 2016).

Nevertheless, the lack of details on the 'intermediate' routes - from Vézelay or Le Puy - in the 5<sup>th</sup> Book of the *Codex*, and the fact that no pilgrim had taken these ways before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, force us to read the text again, no longer literally but symbolically. This is where an anagogical interpretation of the proposed figure, four, gives what seemed to be only a geographical space a new dimension. If four is the number of seasons, of elements, of the Gospels or of the arms of the Cross, it is also the number of the four cardinal points. The choice of four starting points then makes sense, it 'means' something, because there were more than four major pilgrimage shrines in the West around 1200. From the four cardinal points, that is to say from all over the world, one can and one must, head towards Compostela. This is the meaning of the text, and this is the space it encompasses.

But, the text continues, these four routes 'meet in one at Puente la Reina in Spain' and 'from there only one way leads to Santiago'. From Puente la Reina, in Navarre, pilgrims actually took the old Roman northern road, which led westwards to the gold mines of Las Medulas and further on to Galicia. A way that goes from east to west. A way that leads to the *finis terrae*, the end of the world. The way one takes in the morning when one gets up and walks towards sunset. From dawn to dusk, from birth to death. A way that is the 'only way', as Christ says in the Gospel: 'I am the Way, I am Truth and Life' (Jn, 14, 6).

Because to reach the ultimate goal, there is only one way. And this way is matched, in the imagination, by the celestial Milky Way that Saint James himself would have shown to Charlemagne by enjoining him to go and deliver his tomb from the hands of the infidels (Herbers & Santos Noia, 1993:201). The diversity of the world, the distance from the cardinal points are resolved at Puente la Reina: there is now only one way to reach the end of the journey, one way that leads to the promised salvation. The space has been reduced to a path on which rich and poor, beggars and knights, merchants and students, men and women, old and young, are all called to the wedding banquet (Mt, 22:4-10), all meet together. It is the path followed by the apostle James himself, since, having become a pilgrim by the grace of iconography, he accompanies the pilgrim as much as he awaits them on arrival. And this



path takes the name of all the foreigners who converge on it and walk in the same direction: *iter francigenus*, the *camino francés* (French Way).

‘A thousand roads have led men to Rome for centuries who wish to seek the Lord with all their hearts,’ says Alain de Lille around 1175 in his *Doctrinale altum seu Liber parabolarum* (Migne 210, 1855: 591). Rome is in fact at the centre of Christianity. It is the symbol of the militant Church, the guardian of the faith, the place where Saint Peter is buried and where his successors are to be found. It is normal that roads from all directions lead to it, from the north as well as the south, from the west as well as the east. But the way to hope, that is, to a future that is both feared and desired, unknown but full of promise, can only be one. One only takes it once and in one direction.

On arrival at the destination, in Santiago de Compostela, no ‘tour’ is offered to the pilgrim, no visits to various places are proposed. Just as there was only one way to reach the aim of the quest, there is only one place to go there: the Basilica that houses the body of the apostle martyr. The Fifth Book of the *Codex Calixtinus* describes the apostolic sanctuary at length. This is where hope is to be found, this third ‘column’ of Christianity. It is towards hope that the pilgrim walked, the hope of the end of the world, the end of earthly life and its miseries, and the passage towards eternal life: *plus ultra*, beyond.

This is probably why the western portal of the cathedral – *Pórtico de la Gloria* –, which apparently represented the Transfiguration of Christ, was replaced in the 1160s by the manifestation of the Parousia. Christ is in glory, the Last Judgment is made on his left, but in another ark, as in another world, he is surrounded by angels and elect and shows the signs of his Passion and his victory over death. It is the Apocalypse, in its primary sense of ‘revelation’, and Saint James, on the trumeau, welcomes the one who has finished their long journey, who has reached the end of their peregrine life, who hopes to see this glory of God that the sons of Zebedee wanted to share.

To achieve this vision, it is necessary to travel through a space that is both real and symbolic. And for that, time is of the utmost importance. As Alphonse Dupront writes:

*As far as the pilgrimage is concerned, the prehensible fullness of its meaning is a sacred life of space and an act of sacralization of that space, the natural environment of human existence, and the very limits of that existence.*

*Also, to live in space and transcend it, such is the anthropological drama of pilgrimage* (Dupront, 1987:42).<sup>[7]</sup>

To ‘live the space,’ to make ‘a sacred life of the space,’ this space that the symbolic itinerary of the *Codex Calixtinus* offers to pilgrims, takes time. This is undoubtedly what makes the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela a true pilgrimage today, in contrast to the simple visit to a sanctuary renowned for its miracles – Lourdes – or for its Marian apparitions – Fátima and Međugorje. It is necessary to walk towards Santiago and this ‘walk’ which can take weeks or months is even presented as the *sine qua non* condition of the pilgrim of Compostela, to the point of sometimes making the way a goal in itself. The Way, both space and time, makes the pilgrimage and makes the pilgrim.

But this Way has an aim, without which it would have no meaning. We must therefore ask ourselves the question of the meaning of this walk towards Compostela, which is undertaken each year by an increasing number of men and women from all over the world, whose stated motivations are multiple, and who are often atheists, agnostics or indifferent to any form of religion and belief. Nevertheless, the answers that many people give when asked why they left their homes and lived for weeks or months in difficult conditions show that it is a quest, a search for something else, a desire to understand themselves and the world around them, a feeling of latent dissatisfaction.

*Man, as well as bread, needs to base his life on a solid reality, to give it and to detect in it a stability, a strength, a meaning, a value that are for him an essential source of satisfaction. This solid reality, which both dominates his life and intimately confers his achievement, can be called the sacred. To express oneself in this way is to use many metaphors: those of foundation, solidity, stability, strength; it is to appeal to the desire for satisfaction, to mention the aspiration for value and accomplishment, to mention the presence, which is never complete, of meaning. A legitimate attitude, because access to the sacred engages the whole human being, in his personal will, his intelligence in search of the absolute, his sensitivity, his imagination* (Étienne, 1982:7).<sup>[8]</sup>

7. ‘Pour ce qui est du fait pèlerin, la plénitude préhensible de son sens s’avère une vie sacrée de l’espace et une sacralisation en acte de cet espace, milieu naturel de l’exister humain, et limites mêmes de cet exister. Aussi, vivre l’espace et le transcender, telle la dramatique anthropologique du pèlerinage.’

This definition of the sacred given by Jacques Etienne is perfectly suited to the approach of those who undertake the pilgrimage to Compostela. Whatever the image of secularisation - as opposed to sacredness - of the Way, the motivations of those who follow it to its end are not the same as those of the simple walker, the hiker who loves physical effort and contact with nature. Even if the person who departs admits to responding to a physical desire at the same time as to a cultural curiosity, the time of the walk and the space covered will gradually give their undertaking a meaning, will give it a profound signification, a sacredness.

Now, continues Jacques Etienne:

*the sacred world is linked to the symbolic order and the highest impulses of thought are inseparable from the affective-symbolic material without which they would exhaust themselves* (Étienne, 1982: 7).<sup>[9]</sup>

The profound symbolism of the Way of St James, the time taken by those who come from the four cardinal points to travel together - and with the Apostle - the same path, towards the setting sun, towards the 'end of the earth,' following in the footsteps of all who have gone before them, is what gives sacredness to the space travelled. Where and what does the pilgrim walk for, what do they seek in this space?

8. 'L'homme, comme de pain, a besoin de fonder sa vie sur une réalité solide, de lui donner et d'y déceler une stabilité, une force, un sens, une valeur qui soient pour lui une source de satisfaction essentielle. Cette réalité solide qui à la fois domine sa vie et lui confère intimement sa réussite, on peut l'appeler le sacré. S'exprimer de la sorte, c'est recourir à de nombreuses métaphores : celles de fondation, de solidité, de stabilité, de force; c'est faire appel au désir de satisfaction, mentionner l'aspiration à la valeur et à la réussite, évoquer la présence, d'ailleurs jamais pleine, du sens. Attitude légitime, car l'accès au sacré engage l'homme tout entier, dans son vouloir personnel, son intelligence en quête d'absolu, sa sensibilité, son imagination.'
9. 'Le monde sacré est lié à l'ordre symbolique et les élans les plus hauts de la pensée sont inséparables du matériau affectivo-symbolique sans lequel ils s'exténueraient.'
10. 'Entrer dans l'univers du sacré, c'est donc avoir le souci d'obtenir pour sa vie une réussite inconditionnelle, d'entrer en relation avec un Absolu qui à la fois se distingue de la vie et est susceptible de la pénétrer. L'absolu est donc autre, il est l'autre mais il est aussi ce qui affecte, ce qui imprègne, ce qui exalte la vie humaine, la mienne, celle de mon groupe, à la limite l'humanité et même tout être; il n'y a du sacré que s'il y a un sentiment d'une altérité fondamentale avec laquelle cependant on entre en relation au point d'en recevoir un bienfait décisif; dans le sacré il y va de l'identité et de la différence, du même et de l'autre et de leur relation essentielle.'

*To enter the universe of the sacred is therefore to have the concern to obtain for one's life an unconditional achievement, to enter into a relationship with an Absolute who at the same time is distinguished from life and is likely to penetrate it. The absolute is therefore different, it is the other, but it is also what affects, impregnates, exalts human life, mine, that of my group, and even humanity and all beings; there is only sacred if there is a feeling of a fundamental otherness with which one nevertheless enters into a relationship to the point of receiving a decisive benefit; in the sacred it is identity and difference, the same and the other and their essential relationship* (Étienne, 1982:7-8).<sup>[10]</sup>

These are the elements that characterise pilgrimage on the Way of Saint James. The pilgrim is in search of something else, and first of all to recover the self, to recognise the self. But at the same time they experience relationships with other, the one who is so different, who does not speak the same language, does not come from the same social background, does not share the same problems and dissatisfactions, but who makes the same journey, who is helped and helps you, who welcomes or guides you, in whom one discovers 'the other.' On the Way of St. James, strong relationships are forged that last beyond the time of the pilgrimage and beyond the borders.

'To enter into a relationship with an Absolute' refers to the idea of transcendence, to that of 'fundamental otherness,' to God. This is the ultimate step of the pilgrim: to ask oneself the question of God. The nature one discovers throughout days of walking invites one to do so, because nature leads one to reflect on Creation and, as some 12<sup>th</sup> century theologians affirmed, to meet the Creator - *Natura, id est Deus* (Nature, i.e. God) - (Chenu, 1957:19-51). The discovery of religious art, whether churches, sculptures, paintings, calvaries, then serves as a support for reflection, a mediation between the past and the present, the visible and the invisible.

Not all pilgrims on their way to Santiago are believers and perhaps not all of them will be able to define this Absolute towards which they unconsciously tend, to let themselves be invaded by it. It is also in this respect that the Way of Saint James is, in contrast to the simple places of pilgrimage that can be reached in groups and in a short time - by train, bus or plane -, a 'court of the gentiles.' The 'Court of the Gentiles,' as Pope Benedict XVI recalled in March 2011, 'refers to the vast open space near the Temple of Jerusalem where all those

who did not share the faith of Israel could approach the Temple and ask questions about religion.<sup>[11]</sup>

The 'secularisation' of the Way, which many deplore by underlining the 'massification' of the path or the varied and profane motivations put forward by many walkers, by evoking those who have their belongings carried, those who only do the last 100 kilometres to obtain the 'compostela', those who walk on the ways of Santiago without ever going to Santiago, those who arrive there without entering the cathedral, or those who seek esoteric or magical explanations at Cape Finisterre, make this Way a place of encounters between believers and unbelievers, between faithful of different religions, a modern 'court of the gentiles' (Rucquoi, 2017).

According to Alphonse Dupront, the nature of the pilgrim gesture, both in space and time, is extraordinary: it is crossing boundaries, being drawn towards a goal, walking towards a destination, an 'elsewhere' where the presence of supernatural powers will be met. The pilgrim's *iter* is therefore sacred by its term, whether it is small local or regional pilgrimages, or major pilgrimages such as Compostela and Rome: here the journey is punctuated by stopovers that are all visits to holy bodies where the tired body can gain a supply and recharge of sacred power (Dupront, 1985:202–228 cited in Julia, 1991). The pilgrim leaves ordinary life some day, and goes alone or in small groups to the tomb of Santiago, thus renewing the medieval and even modern tradition of pilgrimage. It therefore escapes the brutal transformations which, in contemporary times, limit pilgrimages to Marian places alone, towards which masses of pilgrims, supervised and controlled by the ecclesiastical institution, converge:

*On the whole, the present pilgrimage tends to become a form of a culture of ecclesial religion, with usual liturgical expressions, increasingly exclusive, either Mariolatrical or Christic, in an obvious intellectualization of a divine anthropomorphism, a conscious refusal of elementary sacredness.* (Dupront, 1967: 162)  
[12]

The search for meaning that presides over the journey to Compostela and that accompanies the pilgrim throughout their journey, because it takes place in the sacred space that is the Way, real and symbolic, can thus lead to this double discovery, first of otherness, then of the Absolute. It will profoundly transform and make sacred the one who has completed his journey. This is how Jacques Etienne sums it up:

*Eventually, everything comes down to greeting the Infinite and opening up to his actively transforming presence. To this end, the richness of symbols is offered to men eager to live both divine transcendence and immanence; each symbol does so with its own resources, deeply rooted in man's psyche, in his affectivity and imagination sensitive to the dimensions of space, to the struggle of contrary terms, to the pacifying force of protected intimacy, to the balanced rhythm of alternation; to consent to symbolic systems is in a way to consent to one's own body, even if it is an expressive body inhabited by language* (Étienne, 1982: 16-17).  
[13]

11. *Message of his holiness Benedict XVI to the 'Courts of the Gentiles', initiative promoted by the Pontifical Council for Culture in Paris on the final evening of the event, 25 March 2011* [[https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/pont-messages/2011/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20110325\\_parvis-gentils.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/pont-messages/2011/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20110325_parvis-gentils.html)].
12. 'D'ensemble le pèlerinage actuel tend à devenir forme d'une culture de religion ecclésiale, aux expressions liturgiques habituelles, à dominante de plus en plus exclusive, soit mariolatricque soit christique, dans une intellectualisation évidente d'un anthropomorphisme divin, un refus conscient des sacralités élémentaires.'
13. 'En définitive, tout se ramène à saluer l'Infini et à s'ouvrir à sa présence activement transformante. À cet effet la richesse des symboles est offerte aux hommes avides de vivre à la fois la transcendance et l'immanence divines; chaque symbole le fait avec ses ressources propres, profondément ancrées dans le psychisme de l'homme, dans son affectivité et son imagination sensibles aux dimensions de l'espace, à la lutte des termes contraires, à la force pacifiante de l'intimité protégée, au rythme équilibré des alternances; consentir aux systèmes symboliques, c'est d'une certaine manière consentir à son propre corps, même s'il s'agit d'un corps expressif et habité par le langage.'



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