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History of Camino de Santiago

1. - The Apostle Saint James and the First Mission: Apostolic History, Tradition and Legends

The Gospels introduce us saint James as one of the Twelve, brother of John. These two brothers, with Peter, were the three privileged testimonies of very important and private moments of Jesus, as the Transfiguration and the prayer, the last prayer in Gethsemane. He was in the beginning of the Church in Pentecost, when the Eleven remaining after the Cross received the Holy Spirit and, after Jesus leaving this world, they continue his mission. This is the last moment of the Gospel, and the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, the “Gospel of the Church”, Church's Origins History. The Acts of the Apostles in the Bible tell us how saint James, one of the Twelve Apostles, was the first of them to suffer martyrdom killed by Herod the king:

About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. (Acts 12: 1-5)

We know no more about him from the books in the Bible: just that he was as important in this very first moments of the Church as to be the first to be killed by Herod, who wanted to kill also Peter, who we know well as the leader, the one who had received the “keys” from Jesus. We know very little about him and many of the others in this apostolic group. The *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebe tells just some few details about his mission in Palestine, and the conversion of one of the Jews in charge of him while he was being carried to execution. This is what history tells us in few details. But the tradition of the Church, from the very beginning, tried to fill the historical gaps with another tradition, hagiographical one, connecting the evangelization and the origins of Christianity all over the Mediterranean World and far away in the East and West, with the Biblical origins. We now know historically that Christianity spread in the first centuries all over the Roman world, in the East specially, but also in the West. We have traditions of these centuries that tell us where the Twelve were carrying the Gospel, according to Jesus mission to them at the end of the Gospels. We can call this “traditions” also “legends” without any prejudice: they are not historical chronicles or narrations, but liturgical and hagiographical texts to be used in memory and celebration of these origins. This lists of the Apostles evolve during the first centuries, and finally, in the 6th century we read them saying, in one manuscript tradition from the Gaul (France) at this time, that saint James was the one who carried the Gospel “to the twelve [Jewish] tribes in the dispersion”, confounding him with the James author of the Epistle, in the Western end of the World, in Hispania (the Spanish-Portuguese roman province). Not long afterwards, in the beginning of the 7th century, Isidore from Seville wrote the same notice about Santiago. Isidore is one of the most important Visigoth church writers who wrote many of the ancient roman and christian wisdom in his Encyclopedic Work, very

similar in extension and variety of subjects as the English Bede, in the 8th century. From this time of Bede, in Spain, we have another writer, Beatus of Liebana, in northern Spain, in the little kingdom of Asturias, the only Christian part remaining in Spain after the Arab Occupation in the 711. He is famous for writing a commentary on the Book of Revelation, the Apocalypse of John, trying to show some Christian light over the historical difficulties of the time by reading the last book of the Bible, written at the end of the first generation of Christianity, with the first important persecution. This commentary is famous in Medieval Literature and among medieval manuscripts because of the famous illustrated copies made in the following centuries. They show all a map of the World, as they conceived it in the first medieval centuries, in which they situated the main churches as apostolically missions all over the world, from the East (Thomas in the far east India) and West (James in the far West of Europe). Beatus of Liebana has also a poem to the Apostles and their mission, in which he speaks about James as the one who taught the Gospel and brought it with the Church to Spain. It was written few decades before the discovery of the Tomb of saint James in Compostela. The work of Beatus reminds as that, despite the scary image of darkness usually associated with Middle Ages, and the Revelation Book, it can be a book of light in the darkness, hope in difficult times, and color, light and beauty in Medieval Art and manuscripts. The poem and the tradition also reminds as of the liturgical life and celebrating tradition that maintain history alive, not only in historical books and chronicles, also in the day-to-day live of the people.

2. - The discovering of the Tomb and the beginning of Pilgrimage (9th cent.)

We arrive to the beginning of the 9th century, and we know about a monk, Pelagius, in the very little town corresponding to Compostela, who saw some lights in the sky and strange signs. He called the bishop, Theodomirus of Iria Flavia, the roman town in the coast where there was the diocese and the bishop, and coming here he knew that these lights and signs were from God, indicating the place of a forgotten Tomb, which was found and identified with the Tomb of Santiago and his two disciples, Theodorus and Athanasius. The manuscripts tell us the history, and the archaeological data under the Cathedral, in the excavations and research in the middle of the 20th century, confirm the presence of roman foundations in the place of the shrine and under the medieval Cathedral of Santiago. Bishop Theodomirus connected the supernatural signs with the apostolic tradition of James preaching in Spain and his body being transferred and buried here. He called the king of Asturias, Alfonso II, who came here and gave to the Church the space for building the first Basilica, the first pre-Romanesque Cathedral. We can compare this first little church with the remaining asturian examples of constructions at this time: in Oviedo, the Naranco Palace and the two churches of this period. After him one of his successors, Alfonso III, build a second and grater church in the place of this first, always having the shrine in the head, the East of the building, before the main altar and all the church.

The first historically known pilgrim is Godescalc, bishop of Le Puy, who came to Santiago in the 950-951 as a pilgrim with a group of people. There was a scribe, a monk among them who remained at La Rioja, the monastery of Albelda, copying a manuscript where he wrote down this information. From this manuscript we know about this first documented pilgrimage. This interesting way of knowing about this pilgrimage reminds us that the circulation and exchange of culture and books in Middle Ages, from Antiquity, was as important as to speak of a "Medieval Globalization." We have spoken about the liturgical lists of apostles in which was introduced the information of James in Spain in the 6th century. This lists circulated with the other Christian traditions and books all over Europe. The news of the discovery of the Tomb of James in Spain was also known in Europe from the beginning: a French version of the Martirologe, the books of Saints in the Calendar, tells us near the 840 AD that the tomb of James was visited by "crowds" of pilgrims and devoted men. The monks and monasteries were one of the most

important places were culture and books were copied, produced and distributed in Middle Ages, being Latin the common language, and hospitality among monasteries the way of receiving and having people and books from very different places. This happened also in Northern Spain and Santiago, where the Benedictines were from the very beginning in charge of the spiritual care of the Sanctuary.

The time of the discovering of the Tomb of James is the time of Charlemagne, Charles the Great. There is another legendary tradition, but three centuries after that, in which a way of stars appears in a dream to the emperor Charles, who seeing this "Milky Way" of Stars knew that, at the western end of Europe, he had forgotten the unknown Tomb of the Apostle. The tradition goes on describing the military campaign of the emperor in Spain, against the Arabs but also against the north-Spanish rebels.

In the 997 there was an Arabic attack to the North, and Santiago was the first objective of the attack, from which we know that it has become an important christian sanctuary. The church was burned down and reconstructed soon in a similar way, but in the 1075 they began to build the Romanesque Cathedral, the one we have now.

3. - Medieval Apogee: Gelmirez and the Romanesque period (11-14th cent.)

-Art and Architecture: from the Romanesque Cathedral to Gothic in Santiago

-Books and Culture: Codex Calixtinus, Book of St. James and other medieval books

-Pilgrims from all over Europe

We are approaching the most important moment for the city and for pilgrimage. At this very moment, in middle France, the monastery of Cluny was a meeting point for the most important people at this time in the Church's History, including the bishop Gelmirez of Santiago, and Guide of Borgogne, who became pope Callistus II. The Benedictines were spreading all over Europe, including Spain. A great movement of renewal of the Church was in act, from Rome, Cluny and the main centers of Christianity in Europe. Culture, liturgy, spiritual life was to be renewed. Bishops gathered in "Synods", where both ecclesiastical and civil facts were resolved. The Muslim dread in the Mediterranean and the difficulties in pilgrimage to the Holy Land were faced with the idea of an international mission lead by the Pope and the Emperor: the way of the Cross-, the Crusade. This time of activity and renewal of the Church was also the most important moment for Santiago and pilgrimage. We now of many people, saints and kings, monks and laymen, rich and poor, alone or in big groups, were making their ways to the end of the World, to Santiago. And Santiago, also, has his bigger "monuments" in this time. Not only the Romanesque Cathedral, in a style well known all over the french Way, the "Camino", a style preparing the arrival of Gothic and the new citizen culture. But also in the manuscripts: Gelmirez take care of writing a chronicle, a History of Compostela so as to be known, for ever, not only the past things from the beginning, but also all the things that he, first archbishops, was doing for the glory of James and the Church. He copied also all the old documents, meant to be lost with time, in a recompilation called "Tumbo", a medieval documentary recompilation manuscript. And some years after Gelmirez it was finished the also recompilation manuscript, this time a liturgical one, called *Codex Calixtinus*, the Book of Saint James. It's composed of five different parts, called "Books", independent, assembled in this one piece. The first one is the book of liturgy: sermons, the spiritual sense of pilgrimage, texts for the celebrations, music and songs, the "Passion" of James: how he lived his last moments in Palestine preaching and confronting the Jews and paganism till Martyrdom. The second book is the book of the Miracles of James with contemporary pilgrims helped by God in their difficulties while doing their pilgrimage. It is very common in Sanctuaries and main medieval devotions having recompilations of miracles showing how God acts among men with intercession of the Holy Mary and the greater Saints. The third books, a very little one, tells us how the body of James voyaged from Palestine to Galicia, and how it ended in the Mausoleum

that was then found again in the beginning of the 9th century. The fourth book, very different, independent of the rest, is the Carolingian Legend connecting the History of Europe in the 9th century and Santiago. And the final fifth book is the Medieval Guide to the "Camino": an accurate description of the Way, the length of each journey, where to rest and drink water, which dangers to avoid, and main things to see, till Santiago and the description of the city.

We are in the 12th century. In 13th century we have in Europe the origin of cities and urban communities, the new trade routes and markets, the urban culture with Universities and the new urban orders: the mendicants, mainly Franciscans and Dominicans. The European world opened to the East and Asia: we all know about Marco Polo, but before his travel to China, Franciscan and Dominican missionaries travel to far eastern territories to open a dialogue with Persians and Tartars, Mongolian, even Chinese culture. At this time, people from all over Europe waked to Compostela as pilgrims, as we know from many medieval biographies, hospital's information, and other historical sources.

4. - "Globalized" Medieval Europe

-The Camino as a Way of Cultural, Spiritual and Human connection between people and countries in the fragmentary medieval Europe

-The special status of Pilgrim: Legal and Canonical protection, safe-passage and tax-free movements

-Breaking boundaries: European and Oriental people moving towards Santiago, the Armenian and other Oriental ecclesiastics and laymen; Armenian and Oriental devotion to Saint James (from the first centuries, during Crusades, after Middle Ages)

-Cultural and political relationships among the Way

During all the Middle Ages Europe, politically fragmentary, divided in many little kingdoms, for many years in war one with the other, the Church and Christianity was the "Way" to connect, spread an European common culture and celebration, also an exchange of books, reflections, theology and philosophy, studies, arts. At Santiago and among the main pilgrimage routes in France, Italy and south Germany we have common images, traditions, names, culture, and politically and cultural relations between bishops, friars, teachers, kings and politicians, and even common people.

Even when there was war or confrontation among French and English, among the Spanish kings, between the Pope and the Emperor, pilgrims have a special status, a safe-passage to cross borders and lands without being disturbed or token for a spy or an enemy. Many bridges, towns and roads had a toll and taxes for travelers and traders: pilgrims have also tax-free passage, and even free accommodation, at least in monastic or ecclesiastical hospitals and places. Cathedrals and Confraternities had economical resources just to take care of pilgrims and the way, taken care even of their testaments and family, just in case they didn't come back home, or for the burial, even in Santiago, if they died far away from their lands. We know not many but some few cases of pilgrims coming from Eastern Europe, a long way to Santiago. It is well known the Jacobean tradition and devotion to Saint James, "Santiago", "Jacobus", by Armenians, and some voyages of Armenian people from Jerusalem to Europe, some times searching political aide, after Crusades, but always in religious pilgrimage to the shrines of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, in Rome, and James, in Galicia.

Many historians have studied how the "Camino", the Way, was also a link and connection in Medieval Europe for what we have said: spirituality and theology, but also literature, arts, poetry, and political allegiances and relations in this apparently fragmentary Europe. Tracing the roads in France to Santiago, from Rome to France connecting with it, and the ship routes from Italy, North Europe, France and England to Galicia, we connect the medieval map of Europe by following the pilgrims.

Religious art in Middle Ages shows repeatedly the image of the apostle James, alone, with John or other

apostles, with local saints and the Holy Mary, represented as a pilgrim to Santiago: the shell, "vieira", the mussel pilgrim's shell, the walking stick, the hat. We find this representation everywhere over the routes to Santiago: in France, England, north Europe, German and Italy. Each place represented James as a local pilgrim in traditional local clothes. Specially medieval and Renaissance art, from 12th to 16th century, is very rich and representations of saint James as a pilgrim are very common. He has also with him the Book of the Gospels as an Apostle. We have also specific representations of the "Translation", the transfer of the body of James by his apostles from Jerusalem to Galicia: the boat guided by the angels, the arrival to Galician coast, the cart with the oxen, the final deposition in the burial place that became the shrine and Sanctuary afterwards.

5. - A Way ("Camino") of renovation

-Repentance and reformation

-Hospitality and Charity

Pilgrimage in middle Ages was, initially and mainly, a "way" of conversion, repentance, reformation of life. Pilgrims went to sanctuaries and shrines to be close to a spiritual but also material presence, in the bones and human rests, awaiting for the resurrection of the body. The presence and action of God is not only an interior, intellectual and spiritual one, even if conversion is an interior fact, as every Medieval educated person knew from Saint Augustine and his conversion. But the action of God in Christian faith was incarnated, God takes human flesh, and this is present in sacramental life. The Eucharist is where the presence of Christ continues, but there are many other material means of the presence and power of God in Medieval spirituality and theology, popular but also well-educated one. Miracles, remembered in the hagiographical recompilations, as the *Codex Calixtinus*, were the action of God through their Saints. Saints were not just memories, death people, bones or ghosts of the past. Christian Creed, Christian Faith includes also the resurrection of the body and the after life.

Pilgrimage was one of the ancient and medieval ways of asking forgiveness to God, and being readmitted in the Church after many different sins and transgressions, as we know by the canonical and penitential practice of the Church. Some sins needed a personal "way" and itinerary of repentance so as to acknowledge the seriousness of bad actions, and the personal change implied in God's forgiveness and Church's absolution. Even kings made their ways after committing terrible things. For example, in the 13th century Thomas Becket, bishop of Canterbury, was murdered by King's people for opposing him for many abuses to the Church. He was considered as a martyr, and the King tried to gain the acceptance of the people and forgiveness of the Church asking permission to go to Santiago as a pilgrim.

We know too much about the bloody medieval wars, but historians also know how many bishops and laymen tried to stop Christians fighting Christians. The "Pax Dei", Peace of God, was the medieval ecclesiastical and political law and recommendation for avoiding and banning war and confrontation, even among individuals, in Sacred Times of the Year: Christmas and Easter, Sundays and main feasts. It began with Benedictine monks and some noble French men close to their spirituality ending the X century, and arrived to Spain thanks to the Camino de Santiago: the first time it appears in Spanish literature the "Pax Dei" is in a Synod in Santiago in the beginning of the 12th century.

One of the most important virtues in a Christian is charity; love, taking care of the others. Both Monasteries, Cloisters, Cathedrals and main churches always had a guest and pilgrims place to rest. Hospitals were born not only for ill people in the cities, when towns became cities in the XIII century. They were institutions for accommodating pilgrims and people traveling without a home. Confraternities of saint James all over the different Ways in Spain, France, Italy and elsewhere, gave money to poor pilgrims to make their way, to ill pilgrims to be treated by physicians and doctors, and providing always beds to rest. The history of Charity and social attention in the Church has an important chapter in this attention in Middle Ages and also in Modern Times.

6. - The Crisis of the Camino

- Abuses to pilgrims and false pilgrims
- Wars, Piracy, Epidemics and years of few pilgrims
- Reformation (non-Catholic but also Catholic) and criticism to pilgrimage (15th - 16th cent.)

Not everything was positive about the Camino. The Book of saint James, the *Codex Calixtinus*, speaks about many of the “corruptions” of the way and in the way, to condemn them, to criticize the abuses and the people abusing of pilgrims, to warn pilgrims. Many miracles of saint James involve pilgrims being abused, even to death, from false pilgrims, from cruel people in the way trying to take their money or resources, from many different “evils”. Saint James helped them making justice and punishing corruption and abuse. Miracles are a special narration, but not the only one: civil and canonical laws, books of pilgrimage, and the descriptions of the *Calixtinus* informed us about these corruptions. It was condemned repeatedly the cases of abuse from inn keepers who wanted to take profit from pilgrims abusing economically of them: irregular taxes, taxes from which pilgrims were free and they tried to earn from them, pilgrims falsely accused of robbery and stealing, unfairly condemned but finally being saved, and truth and justice being done, by the intercession of saint James in the case of the miracles. False pilgrims living from charity in the road are also mentioned. We know also the importance of fulfilling the vows when someone promises the apostle or God to do the pilgrimage to Santiago, when he was in a special danger or need, and not doing it, or delaying it. Historical sources tell us the fact, the hagiographical and spiritual texts, as miracles tales or sermons, explain us medieval preaching and spirituality. But there was always the possibility of leaving money in the Will or Testament to have someone doing the pilgrimage to Santiago instead of oneself, when it was impossible at all. Wills and Testaments are a source of further information about pilgrims: one of the dangers of the way was the possibility of never coming back. Diseases, natural dangers, robbery or natural death could happen to anybody in his Way, and the Confraternities of saint James should take care of the last Will of pilgrims and their families and properties, just in case they didn't come back.

War and Epidemics were also a common problem in Medieval Traveling, also for pilgrims. Some Epidemics are well known in History, some years in which people spoke of great mortality in the country side and in the cities, years with few pilgrims, followed by years of people doing their pilgrimage in Thanks-giving for being safe, and for preaching to avoid following Epidemics. The intercession of the Saints is usual in the main diseases in Middle Ages. One of the “patrons” against leprosy is Saint Roche of Montpellier, usually represented as a pilgrim, with the signs of leprosy and both an angel and the dog taking care of him. He was a saint who took care in life of sick people among the French way of Santiago in Southern France, and his veneration spread all over the Camino in the last centuries of Middle Ages. But the intercession of the Saints and the value of relics and shrines could also religiously and spiritually corrupt itself, both with superstition and economic interest. Many sanctuaries and ecclesiastic people made great profit of devotion, degenerating devotion into business, religious art into an economical affair, the glory of the Lord into human vainglory. Also devotion and faith could deform into credulity and superstition, and charity and care for the others into irresponsible pray to God to resolve our problems. Prayer and devotion may always be with love and good actions: it's not possible to “buy” God's mercy and forgiveness for the worst actions by paying the saint or some one for doing a pilgrimage. All this was criticized both by Catholic leaders in Councils, Sermons and literature, and by main protestant Reformers as Luther or Calvin, who in the very first century of Reformation had a bad opinion about pilgrimages, veneration of Saints and many other popular practices, considered by them as superstitions. “Iconoclasm” is a recurrent reformation accusation in the History of the Church, from the first centuries until now, and pilgrimage is included in it. Anyway, many pilgrims continued to make their ways to Santiago, even from protestant places, and nowadays is a ecumenical religious practice,

maybe not officially or theoretically, but at least in practice, as we see from statistics from pilgrims to Santiago in this 21st century.

7. - Saint James as “Patrón de España”, protector and patron

- Medieval and modern iconography of Saint James:
 - Apostle (seating, “sedente”, preaching, with the Gospel)
 - Pilgrim (with the staff, the pilgrims clothes and hat, the pilgrim's water flask, the mussel shell; everywhere in Europe from Medieval to Renaissance and Baroque)
 - Knight (“Clavijo” battle and Spanish Reconquista; fighting the Moors, Saracens or Turks; or just encouraging the Christian troops; the “white rider” from the Revelations Book and its medieval illustrated commentary of Beatus from Liebana)
- Santiago, Saint James and the Spanish Kings and Spanish and American Peoples

The apostle saint James became soon the protector, “patron”, not only of individual pilgrims, but also of countries and communities. It is common in Christian communities, at least from the 4-5th century we are sure of it, to consecrate churches to a Saint, specially the Holy Virgin and the Apostles. Not only the church, as a building, but the Church as a community, also a political, social community, is consecrated to the protection, example and spiritual leadership of a Saint. From the very beginning of the veneration of saint James in Spain and the discovery of the Tomb in early 9th century, we know that northern Spain kings, from Asturias, asked the special protection of James in their main problem: the war against Arabic invasion, the war for surviving themselves as an independent Christian kingdom. Saint James is represented as a rider on a horse, taking this image from the Revelation Book, the Apocalypse, where in the main difficulties there is the image of a white rider counterbalancing the other riders of evil and destruction. We can remember now how the Book of Revelation was well known in this very century thanks to the commentary of the northern Beatus, and further on by the medieval illustrations of the books, many of them in the monasteries or royal libraries contemporary. From this representation comes the “dream of king Ramiro” that show Saint James encouraging the troops going to the battle of Clavijo, in the 844 AD, against the Arabs, and the image of “Santiago Matamoros”, Santiago as a knight and rider fighting the Muslims. This representation became very popular again in the 16 and 17th century again, when war was again pressing the frontiers of Europe and Eastern Europe has been invaded and the Byzantine Empire no longer exist, and Saint James was represented as the knights of Saint James, a military and religious order born in Middle Ages with both a religious and military vocation, and for protection of the Way, the Camino.

But not just a warrior: Saint James, as we have seem, is the protector of pilgrims, the main reason for them, the one who is waiting for them in the Cathedral, so as to be embraced in his statue over the altar over the shrine, as pilgrims still do nowadays as they did from Middle Ages on. Saint James is represented seated, “sedente”, with the Book of the Gospel or the inscription telling that here remains truly his body, with the stick of a pilgrim which can be also the pastoral staff of the first bishop of the apostolic see of Santiago. This representation is common also in book illustration or little figures of Saint James.

The most common and important representation of the apostle is as a pilgrim. The clothes change from place to place, and we know the pilgrims and peoples clothes from Middle Ages to Modern Times, from England to France, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy or Spain, thanks to the images of Saint James as a pilgrim: stick or staff, mussel shell, hat, and the bag. The *Codex Calixtinus* has a description, one of the most beautiful ones for pilgrims, describing the sense of all this elements, in a moral and allegorical sense: the staff as the support of the faith in the Way of our Life, the shell looking as our hands and fingers, as the two shells of the mussel, God's hand and man's hand working together to take care of the others, when going back home; the bag, little as we really need little in our lives, with a big opening

because it must be easier to take out to give the others, than to put in just for egoism.

8. - Modern continuation despite difficulties (16th to 18th century)

- Pilgrims Diaries and Journals from 15th century henceforth
- Hospitals and Fraternities
- After the Council of Trent: new devotions and Saint James; pilgrimage, popular spirituality and official sacramental, penitential and Eucharist practices; continuity

The 16th century is the century of the Council of Trent and the great reformation of the Church. Many churches have split and became separated churches in central and northern Europe and Britain. There was a confrontation that became both a political confrontation and war among European kingdoms, and a spiritual and theological confrontation. Christian people from different countries, despite the medieval unity and "catholicity" in diversity, became separated, distant, and many times enemies and heretics, from both the Catholic and non-Catholic point of view. The Reformation was not only a Protestant fact: Rome encourages a great reformation of the Catholic Church. Pilgrimage and many other ancient practices were condemned by protestant, and seen many times as popular or uneducated practices. The Church encouraged new devotions, specially the centrality of Eucharist over other forms of sacramentality as relics and pilgrimage. Anyway, the Spanish Kings continued to pray to saint James and protect the Sanctuary and the Cathedral, with continuous donations and contributions to the Renaissance, Baroque and Classical new chapels and constructions in the church. As the Spanish went to America and established the Church there, the name of Santiago became as common there as it was here: Santiago de Chile, de Estero, de la Habana, Santiago from central America till the southern countries. And pilgrimage, despite the accusations of superstition or the ironical critics of both catholic and non-Catholic reformist, continued to be important. Wars and Epidemics continued to make it difficult in many years, but statistics, which now appear for the first time, speak about a continuity with medieval importance, in great numbers many times. Medieval information is usually fragmentary and scarce, so modern registers in hospitals, confraternities and churches are a very interesting source for researches.

Another interesting fact, not only religiously, is the series of Diaries and Books of Journey to Santiago. Even if we have some in Middle Ages, especially in the 15th century, the Diaries of 16th to 18th century are more, more accurate, sometimes even with illustrations, some of them being printed and published. We learn from them about the spiritual motivation and experience, the evolution of architecture and arts, the notion of landscape and even the interest for the environment, sometimes an ironical vision of European rivalries between different countries, or a critical vision of abuses, credulity and incredulity in the way.

9. - The contemporary difficulties and the renewal (19th to 21st century)

- Church and Faith Crisis with Enlightenment and Revolution. Decreasing numbers.
- Increasing archaeological and historical investigations, the re-discovering and approval of Leo XIII and Rome
- The contemporary renewal

Much more than the crisis of the 16th century, the beginning of secularization in Europe and the confrontation between Church and Society (politics, culture, arts, economy) from the end of the 18th century affected all religious practices, and pilgrimage. It seems that the 19th century is the most important crisis for all the Church, and also for the Camino. We have decreasing numbers of pilgrims, even if it's always difficult to compare periods, because of the lack of historical information many times. From the Enlightenment till the last quarter of the 20th century pilgrimage to Santiago seems a matter of

few people. Some times authorities try to encourage it, or even use the powerful image of James and Santiago to back up traditional political parties and traditional Christian people, as Francisco Franco did in the 1937, in the middle of the Civil War. But historically this political support reveals a problem and a source of more criticism to the very Way, even if it seems to be no more a problem nowadays. But Enlightenment is also Catholic Enlightenment, and historical research specially. As well as we associate Enlightenment with archaeological and historical research in 19th century; the Church also worked in a critical historical way with all the documents, traditions and manuscripts. It was promoted from the 17th century and we have very important recompilations and studies in the 18th and 19th centuries: in Spain E. Flórez published the *España Sagrada* ("Sacred Spain") in the 18th century, with more than 40 volumes editing texts from Cathedrals and other ecclesiastical libraries and archives, including the "Jacobean" tradition. Even if hagiography and medieval narrations about miracles and dreams were criticized by many historians of the time, the scientific and historical study of this sources, inside and outside the Church, was one of the most important facts in culture, both secular and ecclesiastical culture, in these centuries. And even if many people read the Tradition of Compostela as a kind of medieval fake, many others put the attention in the new archaeological research, the reading of the Latin sources, and there was a renovation and encouraging of "Jacobean" studies, studies on pilgrimage. Antonio López Ferreiro was the most important archivist in the history of the Cathedral of Santiago, reading, studying and editing documents in a huge 11-volume work. He did archaeological research in the shrine, which ended in the pontifical recognition by the pope Leo XIII of the "authenticity" of the human rests in this roman mausoleum: at least they are the same that were founded in the 9th century and venerated in the 12th century. More historians in the 20th century studied the tradition of the apostles and saint James, the history of Santiago and the Camino, and pilgrimages. Not only as an academic fact, in the '70 and '80 pilgrimage gradually increased, from the traditional places as Germany, France and Italy, and also in Spain was encouraged, with the "invention" of the yellow arrows and the yellow shell guiding pilgrims, and the accurate new Guide from Elías Valiñas, the priest of O Cebreiro, the first church in the mountain in Galicia, which can be really called the rediscovery of the Camino de Santiago.

Camino de Santiago, Present and Future

1. - Measuring the Pilgrimage to Santiago: Statistics of an Almost Spontaneous Success

- Difficulties measuring Pilgrimage: medieval sources and unmeasured crowds of pilgrims, the last medieval and modern centuries and the hospitals or confraternities data with multitudes or few people in difficult years (wars or epidemics)
- The last Jubilees: the years 1982-1989 (John Paul II and Santiago), the "expansion" from 1993 (from Jubilee and Holy Year to "Xacobeo")

When we spoke about the history of the Camino, we ended speaking about a "rediscovery" and a renewal of the Camino. The year 1982 is a symbolic date for Santiago and pilgrimage. As you may know, Santiago de Compostela celebrates the Jubilee, a Holy Year, not each 25 years, as Rome and the Catholic Church, not in special rare occasions, but each year when the day of saint James, July the 25th is Sunday. In Middle Ages, the first Holy Year in Santiago was in the 12th century, it happened each 7 years, as biblical Jubilee. From the Gregorian Calendar Reformation it changed. 1965, 1976 and 1982 were Holy Years after the II Vatican Council. In the 1982 the pope John Paul II traveled to Spain and had a "European Speech" at Santiago, speaking about the Christian roots of Europe and the value of pilgrimage

and the Camino as a spiritual and cultural common route and link to all Europe. Pilgrimage began to increase from this years on, including the second visit of this pope in 1989, celebrating the II World Youth Day in the "Monte do Gozo" with more 200.000 young people here. The next Jubilee, 1993, was encouraged by civil regional authorities with the invention of a civil institution called "Xacobeo" (that is Jacobean in Galician language, referred to James, Latin "Jacobus") It was a government department to take care of the conditions of the Camino, the way itself, places to rest pilgrims, heritage on the route, and the national and international promotion of the Camino, as a cultural heritage. In fact, this years, the UNESCO World Heritage declared the Camino and Santiago. This "Xacobeo" department, unfortunately, became more a industrial and business section than cultural and historical, and, anyway, spirituality and theology were left apart for the Church, causing from time to time some argues about the spiritual and religious identity and nature of the Camino, and secularizing versions.

Measuring the pilgrimages in recent decades is easier than in the past. We don't have statistics of pilgrimage in History: there can be reconstructed in an approximate degree for Modern Age, it's not possible really in Middle Ages. But we have a pilgrimage bureau in the Cathedral in the second half of the 20th century registering the pilgrims to Santiago: that is, those who arrive to Santiago walking at least 100 Km., or riding bicycle or horse more than 200 Km., receiving a document, the "Compostela", a kind of pilgrimage certificate. In 1971, a Holy Year arrived 451 pilgrims. In 1976 243 pilgrims were registered. In 1982 things changed: there were 1168 pilgrims, one of them being the Pope. In 1993 in increased to 99.400 pilgrims, but we have the 1989 with the 200.000 young pilgrims. Till the 1993 not all pilgrims were registered, as in historical data. The following Holy Years were 1999, the 2004 with 179.944 pilgrims, most of them from Spain, walking, in the French traditional route, and declaring a religious motivation. In 2010 there were 272.153 pilgrims, the majority also walking and doing the French Way for different religious motivations, but many of them declared a mixed cultural, sport or not religious motivation for coming to Santiago. Many other countries of Europe and the rest of the World are represented. The following years we expected less pilgrims, not being Holy Years, but anyway the were in the 2011 a number of 183.366, in 2012 192.488, in 2013 215.880 and last year, the 2014, were more than 250.000. This year 2015 they will be more less, in prediction, as last Jubilee. Numbers are showing that pilgrimage to Santiago is popular and important. But measuring is one thing, valuing this numbers is another.

2. - Valuing the Pilgrimage: Some Present Personal Testimonies and motivations

How can we read this numbers from a religious Christian point of view? As in History, the personal opinion and experience of pilgrims is one of the most valuable things, even if it is always very personal and subjective. Priests in the Cathedral know it well from confessions in the Cathedral. It is not just "telling the sins" to the priest: in many cases they hear real "conversions", as it was in the beginning the profound meaning of pilgrimage. Many people begin their Way from human and religious experiences of doubt, difficulties, problems, searching for God, or just for an answer when they don't really expect to meet God, or even His own existence is in doubt for them. People comes from the stressful life in great cities, business and searching for sense in life, if they come from the First World, or just violent or just poor conditions if they come from countries not developed or wealthy as European main countries. They meet other people in the Camino, language is never a difficulty, the exchange, and they do a very uncommon thing for them: they speak of life, faith and sense with them, becoming, from unknown foreigners just friends, close friends. But not only confessions, which have the "seal" of sacramentality not being able the priest to speak about it. In the last years the Cathedral developed an important experience, a gathering for prayer, not for great numbers but a reduced one, were pilgrims speak freely at the end of the day, praying and sharing experiences. They talk mainly about fraternity and friendship in the Camino, about the physical experience and the challenge of walking 30km. each day during weeks

or even months, but without the stress or competition of many popular experiences of our world. No TV, no computers or social networks in the phone, just nature and people. And many of them tell about finding God there, even if they explain it in their own words and from their own experience. Not all are Christian, many come from other religious traditions: mainly from a Christian tradition lost in the past. There are catholic and no catholic pilgrims: nowadays the Cathedral has become, spontaneously, an ecumenical meeting point. We may not tell this for all pilgrims, this hundreds of thousands in numbers, but the value of this continued experiences, day by day, is important.

3. - Pilgrim or Tourist? Who's a Pilgrim?

- From the Calixtinus to Paulo Coelho and Martin Sheen; from the French Way to the Kumano's Route

- Without judging the two contemporary examples, the two examples represent how the "Camino" became familiar to the Latin-American and North-American (USA-CAN) cultures; the Japanese example represent the renewed interest from Asia to Old Europe

- The present experience of pilgrims reflects the present religious life and faith of youth and adults, with the same difficulties with Institutional Religion, the so-called New Age or gnostic spirituality, the searching of a faith that matches a real interior experience and life

- Just a sentiment, a feeling, a metaphor; just a mental, intellectual or "spiritual" experience; or more physical, bodily, "real" life: JUST HUMAN or real RELIGIOUS (God's giving and turning to him) SACRAMENT ("towards the invisible through out the visible")

- Tourism or Pilgrimage? World Cultural Heritage, Spiritual Heritage, Business Management. Church-Churches, Christian Fraternities, Lay associations, Governments, Businessmen and Companies, Mass Media...

- Towards the Future: the dangers of succeeding in our mass-media society ("Morir de éxito", "die succeeding"), the deformations of religious and spiritual experiences, the "iconoclastic" corrections; for how long with it last the success?

In last years the number of pilgrims from Brazil and Latin America increased: they have a catholic tradition and popular religiosity very close to us, so it is easy to understand. But we have also the famous book about the Camino by Paulo Coelho, popular and famous writer. As it happens in other things, the media and this novel helped the Way to become very popular. Something similar happened in Germany with Happe Kerkeling's book, and in the USA and Canada with the film "The Way" directed and acting Martin Sheen. Not only Western Culture is interested in Santiago. In recent years the number of tourists coming to Santiago from Eastern Asian Countries is each year higher, and many of them decide to come as pilgrims. The Philippines have an important connection with Spanish culture and are Catholic, so it is just surprising for the distance. But the 2014 there were a Japanese exchange with Santiago linking the Camino with Japanese pilgrimage, specially the "Kumano" route in South Japan islands.

The example of Paulo Coelho is important because of the affirmation that what matters is the Way itself, not the Shrine, the Sanctuary, Christian rites and practices. A kind of interior way, spiritual experience but not in the catholic meaning of the word "spiritual", but more a "gnostic" or "new-Age" fact. Anyway, Christianity has always insisted in the need of graduality and personal discovering of Faith, the need of an interior process which ascetic practices enable. But this affirmation, "the Way -the experience- is what matters", can be a dangerous misunderstanding, with all dangers of Gnosticism, just a subjective emotive reduction of the rich and complex Christian experience. Traditional Religion and rites are not very popular nowadays, at least in urban modern culture, and the vision of "spirituality" represented by Coelho, avoiding consciously the "religious" classical vocabulary, can be a sort of introduction to real, authentic, worthy religious experience. As one Brazilian pilgrim once told me: she knew about the Camino by reading Paulo Coelho, but now she knows personally herself what the Camino really is.

The Japanese experience is also connected with this popular feeling in Western Countries: religious traditions, as Catholic Life and Pilgrimage, became unpopular in the last centuries, not “Enlightened”, not scientifically reasonable, but other foreign spiritual traditions are, instead, interesting. The Western increasing interest for East Asia, China, Japan and the other cultures, is meeting an interest from this countries, also risking losing their identities (Japan among capitalism and production, China from Cultural Revolution till contemporary communism).

The success of pilgrimage today may be the beginning of a decay, as it happens with many popular experiences in mass media and social networks. What now is popular and everyone wants to do, to be just like the others having the “photo” attesting it in Facebook, in a few years is past. Experiences past quickly, and what seems a deep experience, profound, personal, is forgotten in a few months, absorbed by day-to-day life and social pressure. Pilgrimage, as popular, is also a good business, and economics and richness is always a traditional enemy for religiosity and spirituality. Not that economy will end with the Camino, but, worst than it, it can claim the Camino all for it, reducing it to an economic matter. So success is always a moment to pay attention to the originality and authenticity of pilgrimage, as with all religious experiences.

4. - Pilgrimage as a Image of Life and Faith: Learning from History for Our Present Life

- Medieval and modern deformations, distortions and complaints; Reformation, iconoclasm and corrections
- The original meaning: what meant “pilgrim” for the Church and Society in History
- The Church nowadays:
 - 2nd Vatican Council
 - John Paul II and Benedict XVI, pilgrims
 - Pope Francis: from *Aparecida CELAM* document to the *Evangelii Gaudium* and the Jubilee of Mercy
- Pilgrimage as expression of the new approaches from the Church to the World
 - Non-Catholic pilgrims: pilgrimage as a spontaneous ecumenical celebration of Faith
 - New Evangelization of Old Western Christians:
 - “Court of the Gentiles” (“Atrio de los Gentiles”)
 - “Porta Fidei” (“Door of Faith”: Holy Door, “Puerta Santa”, apostolic visit “Ad Limina”)
 - Iniciation of Faith

It will take a long time, a long “way” discussing all the facts in this brief scheme I am presenting, in continuation with everything I have just told. The surprising renovation of a spiritual penitential practice from Ancient and Medieval Church in nowadays, modern experience, as we see in many pilgrims, in the personal face-to-face talk. The conversion of the life and finding God in a Western World, which is, not use to speak about him, to let place for him in popular culture, in mass media. The fact than many traditional arguments or “theological places” where God was found in Medieval Spirituality: environment, nature, poverty, wandering, fraternity, hospitality, praying at the end of a way made together, and so on. An spontaneous translation in modern experience of the religious personal way of saints as Augustine, Francis from Assisi, the spirituality for pilgrims contained in the *Codex Calixtinus*. All these meets the will of the Church in the II Vatican Council to hear the Secular World and to speak to tend, telling the Gospel in words and facts, with faith and love, sharing their hopes and angst. Paul VI spoke about the “Dialogue” with the World and the need of re-inventing in the Church the Evangelization, in a World that was Christian once, but is no more, as society and culture. John Paul II called it New-Evangelization and the pope Benedict XVI insisted in finding places to share common interest with contemporary culture, intellectuality, arts: a “Court of the Gentiles”, called in Spanish

“Atrio” with a special meaning: the place, the square outside the Church where people gather and share, speak, even trade or celebrate. What we have seen about the Camino is that it is not only a “place” but also a way, a lot of places, an opportunity for thousands of people to find this, even not knowing it. Maybe this is the success of the Camino: if prepared on purpose it wouldn't work as it does.

5. - Conclusions

- Polarities of Faith and Pilgrimage
 - The Crisis of Institutions in Western Countries: Institutional encouragement and spontaneous popular response
 - Rites, practices and interior personal experience
 - Intellectual, rational and mental reduction and flesh, material and physical experience
 - Secularization, crisis of religious life but new "ways" of spiritual and interior searching
 - Individualism: individual experience, urban solitude, experience of fraternity and sharing in the Camino; towards a communal, community, Church experience
- The End as a Beginning
 - Being pilgrim for some weeks, becoming pilgrim for the rest of the life (the symbol of the shell and the "Compostela", received at Santiago; always wearing and carrying on the pilgrim's shell)
 - Christian experience as a Life's-Way, not just isolated practices
 - Christian eschatology and Christian Creed: facing the less "modern" part of our Creed, the most difficult to teach or believe in our society and culture.
 - Life as a Pilgrimage: facing illness, accidents, old age and death; the "dark" face of this world and our life's (war, violence, sin);
 - Faith and Hope in God and Men as Brothers, Charity as real Love, resurrection of the Body (not just a non-Christian survival of the soul as a ghost or part of a universal spirit) together with everlasting life and communion of saints

In *Codex Calixtinus* we found a spirituality based on few material simple symbols with a great allegorical existential meaning: this was the greatness of medieval spirituality, the reason why it became popular culture in Europe and, when Christian theology is no more universally accepted, these symbols are still valuable and alive. The shell of pilgrims as a two-valved shell as the hands, with the form of the fingers, symbolizing that, when pilgrimage has ended, we become pilgrims. The shell was given to pilgrims at the end, in Santiago. They put it on, they wear it back home, they were buried with it symbolizing a change of life after a personal itinerary, an interior journey during the exterior physical experience, just as it happened with all rites and practices. The meaning of the bag and hospitality or charity: human charity is not just a fact of being good people, but a fact of discovering that we have received a lot, we were poor and foreigners and someone received us, and God's blessing at the beginning and end of the way is a blessing with the hands of the people helping us. The staff or stick meaning the support of Faith when we crumble in our ways. Everything has an actuality reminding us this polarity of Christian Faith and Christian Life: both community and individual, social and personal, exterior and interior, physical and intellectual, from this life and meaning another Life, from time to eternity, from the visible and human to the invisible and divine.

The Camino is a mirror or image for the Faith, its personal discovering, growing and living; for the Church as family and community based on a common origin in God, acknowledging that we have received all, and all we have and all we are is meant to be shared, to be a gift for the others as it was for us; for the difficult relation between interior and spiritual experiences, and the real world, one's job, life and problems. The Camino is an image of moral or ethical doubts, of existential questions in life, and also in the most problematic thing for post-modern contemporary thought: Eschatology, thinking of the End of

our Life's Way, Death and Afterlife. Christian tradition thinks liturgy and prayer as they represented in the "Portico de la Gloria", the glorious western entrance of the Cathedral: and anticipation, glorious, happy, celebrating of the Future not as an End, but as a new beginning, as real life, in common, for ever.

SELECTION OF TEXTS

Acts 12: 1-5. James Killed and Peter Imprisoned

12 About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. 2 He killed James the brother of John with the sword, 3 and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. 4 And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. 5 So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

THE PILGRIM'S GOAL

Ramón Yzquierdo Perrín, *The City of Santiago de Compostela*, Edilesa, León 2006
Translation by Gordon Keitch, pp. 3-5

"Compostela, the apostolic, most excellent city, richest in all delights, having in its charge the bodily remains of the blessed James, whence it is favored as more fortunate and more noble than all the other cities of Spain" (Codex Calixtinus V, chapter 3)

The origins of the city of Santiago de Compostela are so closely bound up with those of the cult of the Apostle whose name it bears (Santiago= St. James) that until his remains were discovered in the early years of the 9th century, it may be considered not to have existed. According to the *Historia Compostellana* by Theodorus, Bishop of Iria Flavia, he learnt from the hermit Pelagius (Spanish, Pelayo; Galician, Paio) that certain portents were occurring on many nights in a nearby wood, and that an angel had appeared there. He went to the place, saw some heavenly lights and on going deeper into the wood *"found among the undergrowth and bushes a little house containing a marble tomb."* He immediately informed King Alfonso II of the discovery and the king *"overflowing with joy at such important news, hastened to these parts and restoring the church in honor of such a great apostle, changed the bishop's place of residence from Iria to this place, which is called Compostela."*

The Codex Calixtinus, for its part, tells of the Apostle's apparition to Charlemagne in dreams, although he was by then dead, inspiring him to take part in the Reconquest: *"You must go with a great army to fight the wicked pagans and free my Way and my land, and visit my basilica and tomb. And after you, pilgrims will go there from all lands, from sea to sea, asking for forgiveness from their sins and singing the praises of Lord."* Although the account in the *Calixtinus* is obviously legendary and partial, it is unquestionable that the news of the discovery of the Apostle's remains was heard very early on in France, and pilgrims at once began to arrive.

From then on, pilgrimages to Santiago would not stop burgeoning, and their influence in the Reconquest must have been significant when in 997 Al-Mansur conducted a ferocious and devastating raid on Compostela, which is recorded in ancient chronicles. One Moslem chronicle says: *"The Church at Santiago is for the Christians like the Ka'aba is for us. They invoke it in their oaths and make pilgrimages to it from the most distant lands."* After the rebuilding of St. James's basilica, pilgrimages boomed even more, reaching their height in the 12th century and playing an important role in the history of Europe. After a long slow decline, in the middle of the 20th century, a new period of splendor began, with a growing number of pilgrims making their way to Santiago for different reasons and by different means.

Pilgrims have followed and still follow different routes, the major ones being the Northern Route, the French Route, the Portuguese Route and the English Route, and although they all lead to Santiago, the most used one is the French Route, with its ancient guide book full of all kinds of information in the shape of Book 5 of the *Codex Calixtinus*. Many pilgrims would arrive via the Monte do Gozo, or Mount of Joy, situated a few kilometers to the east of the city. From its top, pilgrims first see -at last! - the goal of their wearisome journey, and the excitement it has aroused in some has been recorded expressively in their diaries -and in the very name of the hill.

JOHN PAUL II, SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA Europeistic Act November 9th 1982

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, Spain, Nov. 9— From this place of pilgrimage at Europe's western edge, Pope John Paul II issued an impassioned appeal today for the continent to recover its ancient soul and put it at the service of humanity, irrespective of political divisions.

At the final destination of his 10-day pilgrimage to Spain, speaking from the altar of the medieval cathedral that is said to have been built over the tomb of the Apostle James, the Pope celebrated what he called a European act, in which he spoke as much as a Pole as he did as head of the Roman Catholic Church. 'A Cry Full of Love'

"I, Bishop of Rome and pastor of the universal church, from Santiago issue to you, old Europe, a cry full of love: Find yourself," the Pope said. "Be yourself. Discover your origins. Give life to your roots. Revive those authentic values that gave glory to your history and enhanced your presence on the other continents."

"You can still be the beacon of civilization and stimulate progress throughout the world," he said. "The other continents watch you and expect from you the same response that St. James gave to Christ: 'I can do it.' "

The Pope spoke in the presence of King Juan Carlos and representatives of European organizations and universities especially invited for the "act" that was clearly intended as the high point of the papal tour. Shortly afterward the Pope boarded his plane for the return to Rome.

His speech contained no reference to the United States, except possibly by inference among the countries enhanced by European expansion, and it left in doubt whether the Soviet Union formed part of Europe in his worldview. Christian and Humanist Traditions

The Europe the Pope described was equivalent to Christian Europe. He said the history of the founding of its nations "coincides with the penetration of the gospel." European identity, the Pope declared, "is incomprehensible without Christianity." He laid claim on behalf of Christianity to "that which has ripened the civilization of the continent, its culture, its dynamism, its activeness, its capacity for constructive expansion on other continents as well; in a word, all that constitutes its glory."

Europe, the Pope asserted, retains its soul through the continuation of what he described as its Christian and humanist traditions. Among them he cited the dignity of the human person, justice, liberty, respect for life and tolerance. Europe has contributed most to the development of the world, the Pope said, "in the field of ideas as well as in that of work, in that of science and of art."

Referring to "unnatural fractures" that deprive its peoples from meeting freely, Pope John Paul urged Europe to strive jointly in the service of peaceful coexistence and for the solution of the problems of other continents. The Ills of the World. The Pope listed as the ills of the world "secularized ideologies that go as far as to negate God and limit religious liberty," excessive importance given to economic success and materialism and hedonism that attack "the values of the prolific and united family." For those reasons, he said, Europe must again find its soul and work to overcome such problems.

<http://www.nytimes.com/1982/11/10/world/pope-in-spain-urges-europe-to-be-beacon-of-civilization.html>

CELAM APARECIDA Document (2007)

259. Entre las expresiones de esta espiritualidad se cuentan: las fiestas patronales, las novenas, los rosarios y via crucis, las procesiones, las danzas y los cánticos del folclore religioso, el cariño a los santos y a los ángeles, las promesas, las oraciones en familia. Destacamos las peregrinaciones, donde se puede reconocer al Pueblo de Dios en camino. Allí, el creyente celebra el gozo de sentirse inmerso en medio de tantos hermanos, caminando juntos hacia Dios que los espera. Cristo mismo se hace peregrino, y camina resucitado entre los pobres. La decisión de partir hacia el santuario ya es una confesión de fe, el caminar es un verdadero canto de esperanza, y la llegada es un encuentro de amor. La mirada del peregrino se deposita sobre una imagen que simboliza la ternura y la cercanía de Dios. El amor se detiene, contempla el misterio, lo disfruta en silencio. También se conmueve, derramando toda la carga de su dolor y de sus sueños. La súplica sincera, que fluye confiadamente, es la mejor expresión de un corazón que ha renunciado a la autosuficiencia, reconociendo que solo nada puede. Un breve instante condensa una viva experiencia espiritual¹⁵². 260. Allí, el peregrino vive la experiencia de un misterio que lo supera, no sólo de la trascendencia de Dios, sino también de la Iglesia, que trasciende su familia y su barrio. En los santuarios, muchos *peregrinos toman decisiones que marcan sus vidas. Esas paredes contienen muchas historias de conversión, de perdón y de dones recibidos, que millones podrían contar.* 261. *La piedad popular penetra delicadamente la existencia personal de cada fiel y, aunque también se vive en una multitud, no es una "espiritualidad de masas". En distintos momentos de la lucha cotidiana, muchos recurren a algún pequeño signo del amor de Dios: un crucifijo, un rosario, una vela que se enciende para acompañar a un hijo en su enfermedad, un Padrenuestro musitado entre lágrimas, una mirada entrañable a una imagen querida de María, una sonrisa dirigida al Cielo, en medio de una sencilla alegría.*

262. *Es verdad que la fe que se encarnó en la cultura puede ser profundizada y penetrar cada vez mejor la forma de vivir de nuestros pueblos. Pero eso sólo puede suceder si valoramos positivamente lo que el Espíritu Santo ya ha sembrado. La piedad popular es un "imprescindible punto de partida para conseguir que la fe del pueblo madure y se haga más fecunda"¹⁵³. Por eso, el discípulo misionero tiene que ser "sensible a ella, saber percibir sus dimensiones interiores y sus valores innegables"¹⁵⁴. Cuando afirmamos que hay que evangelizarla o purificarla, no queremos decir que esté privada de riqueza evangélica. Simplemente, deseamos que todos los miembros del pueblo fiel, reconociendo el testimonio de María y también de los santos, traten de imitarles cada día más. Así procurarán un contacto más directo con la Biblia y una mayor participación en los sacramentos, llegarán a disfrutar de la celebración dominical de la Eucaristía, y vivirán mejor todavía el servicio del amor solidario. Por este camino, se podrá aprovechar todavía más el rico potencial de santidad y de justicia social que encierra la mística popular.*

259. Among the expressions of this spirituality are: patron saint celebrations, novenas, rosaries, the Way of the Cross, processions, dances and songs of religious folklore, affection for the saints and angels, solemn promises, and family prayer. We highlight pilgrimages, where the People of God can be recognized in their journey. There the believer celebrates the joy of feeling surrounded by myriad brothers and sisters, journeying together toward God who awaits them. Christ himself becomes pilgrim, and walks arisen among the poor. The decision to set out toward the shrine is already a confession of faith, walking is a true song of hope, and arrival is the encounter of love. The pilgrim's gaze rests on an image that symbolizes God's affection and closeness. Love pauses, contemplates mystery, and enjoys it in silence. It is also moved, pouring out the full load of its pain and its dreams. The confident prayer, flowing sincerely, is the best expression of a heart that has relinquished self-sufficiency, recognizing that alone it can do nothing. A living spiritual experience is compressed into a brief moment.¹⁵²

260. In it, pilgrims undergo the experience of a mystery that goes beyond them, the transcendence not only of God, but also of the Church, which transcends their family and their neighborhood. At shrines many pilgrims make decisions that mark their lives. These walls contain many stories that millions could tell of conversion, forgiveness, and gifts received.

261. Popular piety delicately permeates the personal existence of each believer, and even though he or she lives in a multitude, it is not a “mass spirituality.” At different moments of daily struggle, many go back to some small sign of God’s love: a crucifix, a rosary, a candle lit to accompany a child in his or her illness, an Our Father murmured amidst tears, a tender glance at a beloved image of Mary, or a smile directed toward heaven in the midst of a simple joy.

262. It is true that faith that was incarnated in the culture can be deepened and permeate ever better how our peoples live. But this can happen only if we value positively what the Holy Spirit has already sown. Popular piety is an “indispensable starting point in deepening the faith of the people and in bringing it to maturity.”¹⁵³ Hence, the missionary disciple must be “sensitive to it, know how to perceive its interior dimensions and undeniable values.”¹⁵⁴ When we say that it has to be evangelized or purified, we do not mean that it is devoid of gospel wealth. We simply want all members of the believing people, recognizing the testimony of Mary and also of the saints, to try to imitate them more each day. Thus they will strive for a more direct contact with the Bible and greater participation in the sacraments, come to enjoy the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, and express even better the service of love in solidarity in their lives. This is the way, which will make it possible to draw on the rich potential of holiness and social justice encompassed in the people’s mysticism.

263. We cannot deprecate popular spirituality, or consider it a secondary mode of Christian life, for that would be to forget the primacy of the action of the Spirit and God’s free initiative of love. Popular piety contains and expresses a powerful sense of transcendence, a spontaneous ability to find support in God and a true experience of theological love. It is also an expression of supernatural wisdom, because the wisdom of love does not depend directly on the enlightenment of the mind, but on the internal action of grace. That is why we call it popular spirituality, that is, a Christian spirituality which, while it is a personal encounter with the Lord, includes much of the bodily, the perceptible, the symbolic, and people’s most concrete needs. It is a spirituality incarnated in the culture of the lowly, which is not thereby less spiritual, but is so in another manner.

EVANGELII GAUDIUM (Pope Francis, 2013)

The evangelizing power of popular piety

122. In the same way, we can see that the different peoples between whom the Gospel has been inculturated are active collective subjects or agents of evangelization. This is because each people is the creator of their own culture and the protagonist of their own history. Culture is a dynamic reality which a people constantly recreates; each generation passes on a whole series of ways of approaching different existential situations to the next generation, which must in turn reformulate it as it confronts its own challenges. Being human means, “being at the same time son and father of the culture to which one belongs”. [97] Once the Gospel has been inculturated in a people, in their process of transmitting their culture they also transmit the faith in ever new forms; hence the importance of understanding evangelization as inculturation. Each portion of the people of God, by translating the gift of God into its own life and in accordance with its own genius, bears witness to the faith it has received and enriches it with new and eloquent expressions. One can say, “a people continuously evangelizes itself”. [98] Herein lies the importance of popular piety, a true expression of the spontaneous missionary activity of the people of God. This is an ongoing and developing process, of which the Holy Spirit is the principal agent. [99]

123. Popular piety enables us to see how the faith, once received, becomes embodied in a culture and is

constantly passed on. Once looked down upon, popular piety came to be appreciated once more in the decades following the Council. In the Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI gave a decisive impulse in this area. There he stated that popular piety “manifests a thirst for God which only the poor and the simple can know” [100] and that “it makes people capable of generosity and sacrifice even to the point of heroism, when it is a question of bearing witness to belief”. [101] Closer to our own time, Benedict XVI, speaking about Latin America, pointed out that popular piety is “a precious treasure of the Catholic Church”, in which “we see the soul of the Latin American peoples”. [102]

124. The *Aparecida Document* describes the riches, which the Holy Spirit pours forth in popular piety by his gratuitous initiative. On that beloved continent, where many Christians express their faith through popular piety, the bishops also refer to it as “popular spirituality” or “the people’s mysticism”. [103] It is truly “a spirituality incarnated in the culture of the lowly”. [104] Nor is it devoid of content; rather it discovers and expresses that content more by way of symbols than by discursive reasoning, and in the act of faith greater accent is placed on *credere in Deum* than on *credere Deum*. [105] It is “a legitimate way of living the faith, a way of feeling part of the Church and a manner of being missionaries”; [106] it brings with itself the grace of being a missionary, of coming out of oneself and setting out on pilgrimage: “Journeying together to shrines and taking part in other manifestations of popular piety, also by taking one’s children or inviting others, is in itself an evangelizing gesture”. [107] Let us not stifle or presume to control this missionary power!

125. To understand this reality we need to approach it with the gaze of the Good Shepherd, who seeks not to judge but to love. Only from the affective *connatural* born of love can we appreciate the theological life present in the piety of Christian peoples, especially among their poor. I think of the steadfast faith of those mothers tending their sick children who, though perhaps barely familiar with the articles of the creed, cling to a rosary; or of all the hope poured into a candle lighted in a humble home with a prayer for help from Mary, or in the gaze of tender love directed to Christ crucified. No one who loves God’s holy people will view these actions as the expression of a purely human search for the divine. They are the manifestation of a theological life nourished by the working of the Holy Spirit who has been poured into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5).

126. Underlying popular piety, as a fruit of the inculturated Gospel, is an active evangelizing power, which we must not underestimate: to do so would be to fail to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit. Instead, we are called to promote and strengthen it, in order to deepen the never-ending process of inculturation. Expressions of popular piety have much to teach us; for those who are capable of reading them, they are a locus theological that demands our attention, especially at a time when we are looking to the new evangelization.