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According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “the religious sense of the Christian people has always found expression in various forms of piety surrounding the Church's sacramental life, such as the veneration of relics, visits to sanctuaries, pilgrimages, processions, the stations of the cross, religious dances, the rosary, medals, etc.”¹ Indeed, pilgrimage—the journey of a pilgrim to a shrine or sacred place—has long been part of Christian life. While Jesus Christ had not dictated to his followers to go on pilgrimages, unlike Muhammad or the Buddha, and persecution in the first few centuries of the Christianity made pilgrimage difficult, after the conversion of Constantine and his victory over the pagan Licinius in the 4th century C.E., leaving the entire Roman Empire united under one Christian emperor, pilgrimage to the Holy Land began “in earnest.”²

Other places of pilgrimage then sprang up in the European Middle Ages, including Rome, due to the Pope and the tombs of Saints Peter and Paul, as well as the other tombs of saints such as Saint Lawrence; the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, due to the tomb of St. James the Great, with its pilgrimage routes known as the Camino de Santiago or, in English, the Way of St. James; Canterbury Cathedral in England and its tomb of St. Thomas Becket; and Assisi in Italy, due to the lives and tombs of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare of Assisi.³ New places of pilgrimage have continued to be founded, from the Early modern period to modern day, both in Europe, such as the Shrine of our Lady of Lourdes in Frain, due to an 1858 Marian apparition, and the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal, due to a 1917 Marian

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed., (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops-Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2016), sec. 1674, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/catechism/418/>.

² Simon Coleman and Simon Elsner, *Pilgrimage: Past and Present in the World Religions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 80.

³ Simon Coleman and Simon Elsner, *Pilgrimage*, 103-105, 133.

apparition, and in European-colonized places, such as the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico, due to a 1531 Marian apparition.⁴

Along with these sacred sites develop a tourism industry, which includes the sale of souvenirs, such as the aforementioned rosaries and medals, and the construction of infrastructure to feed, house, and entertain the pilgrims. Therefore, pilgrimage places can heavily impact an area, from job growth to population increases to infrastructure development.⁵ These pilgrimage places, and the routes to them, offer opportunities for local economic development. However, this development can also cause problems, such as overcrowding and negative impacts to “the cultural and historical purpose of the city and the pilgrimage experience.”⁶ This paper seeks to investigate and understand sustainable economic development driven by European Catholic pilgrimage routes and sites and what has been done, or what can be done similarly, in the US, particularly in light of the effects and revelations of a global pandemic.

⁴ Simon Coleman and Simon Elsner, *Pilgrimage*, 128-129.; Francesca Merlo, “The story of Our Lady of Guadalupe,” *Vatican News*, December 11, 2018, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2018-12/our-lady-of-guadaloupe-feast-day-mexico-america.html>.

⁵ Elisabeth J.E Graave, Jeroen Klijs, and Wim Heijman, “The Economic Impact of Pilgrimage: An economic impact analysis of pilgrimage expenditures in Galicia,” *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 5, no 3 (2017), accessed December 17, 2021, 40, <https://doi.org/10.21427/D7DD83>.

⁶ Rubén C. Lois-González, Xosé M. Santos, and Pilar Taboada-de-Zúñiga Romero, “The Camino de Santiago de Compostela: The Most Important Historic Pilgrimage Way in Europe,” in *Religious Pilgrimage Routes and Trails: Sustainable Development and Management*, ed. D.H. Olsen and A. Trono (Wallingford, UK: CABI, 2018), 83.; Elisabeth J.E Graave et al, “The Economic Impact of Pilgrimage: An economic impact analysis of pilgrimage expenditures in Galicia,” 40.

Santiago de Compostela

The first site this paper will talk about is the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, which, as mentioned before, does not just involve a specific site-in this case this Spanish city's cathedral-but also established pilgrimage routes across Spain. Though the number of people partaking in this medieval pilgrimage had dropped since the Reformation, the number of pilgrims has been increasing in a post-World War II revival caused by "a period of serious social reflection . . . relative peace in Western Europe and the increased mobility of middle-class Europeans seeking leisure opportunities", causing a boom in the Spanish tourism industry.⁷ The city hosted two Holy Years in the 1990s-1993 and 1999. During the former, "almost 100 miles of the Camino were restored, new pilgrims' lodgings, cultural and other urban buildings were built or renovated, and overnight hotel stays totaled more than 38 million," with the Galician government investing millions to capitalize on the renewed interest in the pilgrimage. However, their efforts also commercialized and secularized the pilgrimage. In 1999, a better balance between the commercial and spiritual was struck. There was great Church-state collaboration, with the Church focused on religious gatherings while the state focused on tourist-cultural promotion. Through these efforts, nearly 11 million visitors came to Santiago de Compostela, with only 5.2 million not staying overnight. These visitors spent 500,000 million pesetas (U.S. \$280 million), representing 10% of Galicia's 1999 Gross Domestic Product. For these pilgrims, 39 hotels were built, which added 2,500 new available rooms and created 1,000 jobs in the local hotel industry. Along the Camino route in the government's network of pilgrimage lodgings,

⁷ Donn Tilson, "Religious-Spiritual Tourism and Promotional Campaigning: A Church-State Partnership for St. James and Spain," *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing* 12, no 1-2 (2005), accessed December 17, 2021, 24, https://doi.org/10.1300/J150v12n01_03.

there were also 650,000 overnight stays by travelers, over twice as much as in 1993. Finally, 9,000 jobs were also created in the service sector.⁸

The pilgrimage's economic impact has continued. In 2019, almost 350,000 thousand pilgrims received their *compostela* certificate (which shows their completion of the traditional pilgrimage), a significant increase from 1993's 99,438, 1999's 154,613 and 2015's 262,516.⁹ Just in the region of Galicia alone, in 2010 pilgrimage expenditures created between €59.750 million and €99.575 million in Gross Value Added, as well as between 1,362 and 2,162 jobs, mainly 'Retail and Travel Services' industry, though the 'Industry and Manufacturing', 'Services' and 'Financial and Real Estate Services' industries also benefited. Yet, "there is still room for the growth of pilgrimage in the region of Galicia."¹⁰ Across the pilgrimage route, rural municipalities have continued to declining and aging populations, showing weak economic dynamism. Yet, some localities in Galicia, such as Sarria, Palas de Rei, Arzúa, and Melide, have become nodes on the route, where a greater concentration of tourists have led to a multitude of small businesses and commercial activity.¹¹

However, due to the pandemic, which caused the Spanish government to block foreign and domestic travel except during the summer, the number of pilgrims did go down significantly,

⁸ Donn Tilson, "Religious-Spiritual Tourism and Promotional Campaigning," 24-27, 32.

⁹ Rubén C. Lois-González et al, "The Camino de Santiago de Compostela: The Most Important Historic Pilgrimage Way in Europe," 75.

¹⁰ Elisabeth J.E Graave et al, "The Economic Impact of Pilgrimage: An economic impact analysis of pilgrimage expenditures in Galicia," 39-40.

¹¹ Roland, "7 reasons why people walk the Camino de Santiago Pilgrimage," Camino Ways, January 28, 2021, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://caminoways.com/7-reasons-why-people-walk-camino>.; Rubén C. Lois-González et al, "The Camino de Santiago de Compostela: The Most Important Historic Pilgrimage Way in Europe," 83.

to only about 54,000, in 2020.¹² Yet, this decrease in numbers may not be permanent, as the Galician government has again undertaken investment to promote the Camino. In 2021, Google Arts and Culture partnered with the Regional Government of Galicia, the Regional Government of Aragon, Santiago Cathedral Foundation, and the Spanish Federation of Associations of Friends of the Way of Saint James to create the website ¡Buen Camino!, a project that promotes the Camino. This site includes guides to various routes, photos, a 360-degree tour of some main sites for a virtual pilgrimage, and provides resources for those wishing to do the physical pilgrimage.¹³ In addition, the number of pilgrims in 2021 and 2022 may also be boosted due to Pope Francis's extension of the 2021 holy year dedicated to St. James through 2022. Though the Santiago Archbishop Julián Barrio is cautiously optimistic that 300,000 pilgrims will visit in 2021, it shall remain to be seen what the final numbers will be, and what impact both the new website and the holy year will have.¹⁴

¹² Joseph Wilson and Iain Sullivan, "Pilgrims return to Spain's 'El Camino' paths after pandemic," *AP News*, June 5, 2021, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/europe-spain-pandemics-lifestyle-travel-34e5e6740db0ce7319e5156fb4a548c5>.

¹³ Zelda Caldwell, "Google launches a pretty incredible Camino de Santiago pilgrimage page," *Aleteia*, October 4, 2021, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://aleteia.org/2021/10/04/google-launches-a-pretty-incredible-camino-de-santiago-pilgrimage-page/>.

¹⁴ Joseph Wilson and Iain Sullivan, "Pilgrims return to Spain's 'El Camino' paths after pandemic."

Lourdes

The second European holy site this paper will talk about is Lourdes, a town with “a cityscape molded by mass tourism and marked by faded souvenir shops.”¹⁵ In terms of sheer size, Lourdes is one of the most visited Catholic pilgrimage sites, receiving over 5 million visitors and \$300 million in income annually.¹⁶ Since the construction of basilicas and churches at this 1858 Marian apparition site, pilgrims have constantly flocked to the town, aided by the establishment of trains. This pilgrimage, and the job opportunities related to it, has caused the town to continue to grow, as opposed to other towns in the Pyrenees Mountains.¹⁷

However, this dependence on religious tourism caused the town to be crippled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With almost the entire town dedicated to the tourism industry, when 95% of pilgrimages to Lourdes were cancelled and about 1.5 million accommodation reservations (65% of the total 2.2 million) for 2020 were cancelled, many of the town’s hotels, restaurants and stores also had to close.¹⁸ Yet, Lourdes was innovative, creating the world’s first virtual pilgrimage, which reached 80 million viewers in 10 languages. According to Monseigneur

¹⁵ Mary Winston Nicklin, “France’s most famous pilgrimage site plans a new tourism future,” National Geographic, October 7, 2021, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/frances-most-famous-pilgrimage-site-plans-a-new-tourism-future>.

¹⁶ Franciszek Mróz, “The Impact of COVID-19 on Pilgrimages and Religious Tourism in Europe During the First Six Months of the Pandemic,” *Journal of religion and health* 60, no 2 (2021): 625-645, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-021-01201-0>; Mary Winston Nicklin, “France’s most famous pilgrimage site plans a new tourism future,” National Geographic.

¹⁷ Mary Winston Nicklin, “France’s most famous pilgrimage site plans a new tourism future,” National Geographic.; Matina Terzidou, Dimitrios Stylidis, and Edith M. Szivas, “Residents’ Perceptions of Religious Tourism and its Socioeconomic Impacts on the Island of Tinos,” *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development* 5, no.2 (2008), accessed December 17, 2021, 115, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790530802252784>.

¹⁸ Franciszek Mróz, “The Impact of COVID-19 on Pilgrimages and Religious Tourism in Europe During the First Six Months of the Pandemic.”

Olivier Ribadeau Dumas, rector to the Sanctuary of Lourdes, technology both became a way for worldwide connection while also “creating a desire for pilgrims to return, because we don’t live a pilgrimage from our couch.”¹⁹

This pandemic, and the change due to it, has also caused the town to think more in terms of reimagining the future of their town with the goal of sustainability. The town had changed very little over time, since it was doing well. Now, though, the need to adapt can be seen. In terms of economics, there is the Governmental “Avenir Lourdes” plan—a 10-year plan to rebuild Lourdes through modernization and by attracting new visitors “in a sustainable way.”²⁰ While the sanctuary at Lourdes will still be the main destination of the town, and indeed the pandemic has only increased the feeling in some that “Lourdes has always been a place of hope,” there will be other, new attractions, such as a “medieval” walking path leading to a restored 8th century castle, that would attract different tourists. In terms of faith, the clergy, such as Monsignor Dumas, has seen the need for “a larger inclusion of the type of people we welcome... so that in 2030 Lourdes can still fulfill its mission,” citing national dechristianization and the change in visitor profile from the traditional tour groups to independent travelers, who have no guides and priests to lead them. For these individual pilgrims, the sanctuary has enacted the “Pilgrim for the Day” program to guide them. Ultimately, while religious heritage tourism has helped to grow, develop, and shape Lourdes, and it will continue to do so, the town has realized the importance of both having

¹⁹ Mary Winston Nicklin, “France’s most famous pilgrimage site plans a new tourism future,” National Geographic.

²⁰ Mary Winston Nicklin, “France’s most famous pilgrimage site plans a new tourism future,” National Geographic.

other incentives to visit and that modernization and adaptation is key to sustainability and survival.²¹

United States Pilgrimages

Unlike Europe's long and strong pilgrimage tradition, the pilgrimage heritage in the United States is a bit different. According to Dr. James Mills, an associate professor of Geography and Environmental Sustainability at State University of New York at Oneonta, "the U.S. has never had a strong tradition of pilgrimage," partly due to the historical Protestant majority the United States has had.²² Following Martin Luthor's lead, who denounced going on pilgrimages as he saw these trips as nonbiblical opportunities for people to sin, most Protestants have avoided or rejected going on pilgrimages. Pilgrimages to saint shrines also do not line up with Protestant beliefs, as Protestants do not venerate saints. With the lack of belief in saint veneration, and even disapproval of doing so, they do not go on pilgrimages to shrines commemorating them. Besides the Protestant reason, another reason behind why reason the U.S. never developed a pilgrimage tradition is because of it was not the place where key figures of religious traditions lived-whether Jesus, Muhammad, the Buddha, or various saints. Therefore,

²¹ Mary Winston Nicklin, "France's most famous pilgrimage site plans a new tourism future," National Geographic

²² James Mills, "The US has never had much of a pilgrimage tradition – perhaps now is the opportunity," The Conversation, March 24, 2021, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/the-us-has-never-had-much-of-a-pilgrimage-tradition-perhaps-now-is-the-opportunity-153069>.

Americans have often felt the need to go abroad to see these places associated with the origins or major moments of a religion-in the case of Christianity, Jerusalem. This emphasis on international religious tourism limits which Americans can go on pilgrimages, as well as how often pilgrimages can be done, due to limit and economic constraints.²³

However, as Dr. Mills points out, more and more Americans are interested in pilgrimage and spiritual tourism.²⁴ Along with this rise in the desire to go on pilgrimages is the fact that Catholicism is still growing throughout the world in all continents except Europe, even though the number of those identity as religious, including identity as Catholic, in the United States has been declining.²⁵ Therefore, there is a growing pool of pilgrims, and potential pilgrims, to American pilgrimage sites, both nationally and internationally. In addition, there is precedent for popular places of pilgrimage in the Americas through the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. Like with Santiago de Compostela, it benefits from being an engrained part of Mexican cultural heritage, with Our Lady of Guadalupe having become a symbol of Mexican identity. Yet, this shrine is even more well-visited than Santiago or Lourdes. Receiving 20 million pilgrims per year, it is one of, if not the most visited Catholic site in the world, showing

²³ James Mills, “The US has never had much of a pilgrimage tradition – perhaps now is the opportunity.”

²⁴ James Mills, “The US has never had much of a pilgrimage tradition – perhaps now is the opportunity.”

²⁵ Claire Giangravé, “Vatican census shows Catholicism growing everywhere but Europe,” *Religion News Services*, October 21, 2021, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://religionnews.com/2021/10/21/vatican-census-shows-catholicism-growing-everywhere-but-europe/>.; “About Three-in-Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated,” Pew Research Center, December 14, 2021, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/>.

that just because pilgrimage sites are located outside of Europe does not mean that these places cannot become popular.²⁶

In addition, though pilgrimage within in the United States does not have a robust history, the United States does already have places of Catholic pilgrimage, with varying levels of popularity. For example, there is the National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help in Champion, Wisconsin, the first, and so far only site of an approved Marian apparition in the United States. However, it receives substantially fewer visitors than the other shrines associated with Marian apparitions in Europe and Mexico, receiving only 160,000 visitors in 2018. Though, this number does show that the shrine is increasing in popularity, as in 2008 the shrine received only 10,000 visitors.²⁷ One Catholic location that does receive millions of visitors, though, is St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, receiving over 5 million visitors annually.²⁸ Another popular place is the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Des Plaines, which receives 2 million visitors annually, making it the visited shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe in the United States and the second-most visited shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe overall-the first is the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. More than 200,000 people visit this Illinois shrine for the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, many walking there on foot and taking part in processions. According to the shrine's rector, many visit this shrine because they cannot visit the one in

²⁶ Francesca Merlo, "The story of Our Lady of Guadalupe."

²⁷ Mackenzie Amundsen and Kristyn Allen, "Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help breaks ground on prayer center," WBAY, October 24, 2018, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.wbay.com/content/news/Shrine-of-Our-Lady-of-Good-Help-breaks-ground-on-prayer-center-498420811.html>.

²⁸ Liam Stack, "With Tourists Gone, St. Patrick's Cathedral Pleads for Help," *The New York Times*, July 19, 2020, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/19/nyregion/st-patricks-cathedral-pandemic-budget.html>.

Mexico.²⁹ The largest Catholic church in North America, Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C., also receives 1 million visitors annually, as does the Basilica of the National Shrine of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle in San Juan, Texas.³⁰ A sixth place of pilgrimage is the El Santuario de Chimayó shrine in New Mexico, a shrine known as “Lourdes of America” that the National Park Service has called “one of the most important Catholic pilgrimage centers in the United States.” It receives over 300,000 visitors per year.³¹

In total, there are over 70 national shrines in the United States, as well as 193 cathedrals and 89 basilicas (some basilica are also cathedrals and are included in that number).³² There are also hundreds of non-cathedral and non-basilica sites in the United States which are or could also become places of pilgrimage. This could be due to saint veneration such as the Miraculous Medal Shrine in Philadelphia, a shrine that houses one of the ten still remaining original

²⁹ Karen Callaway, “Guadalupe shrine breaks ground on new entrance,” Chicago Catholic, August 4, 2021, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.chicagocatholic.com/chicagoland/-/article/2021/08/04/guadalupe-shrine-breaks-ground-on-new-entran-1>; Laura Rodríguez Presa, “Chicago-area Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, 2nd only to Mexico City, grows as faithful aim to honor Mary for what they see as answered prayers,” Chicago Tribune, December 11, 2019, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-our-lady-of-guadalupe-shrine-des-plaines-pilgrimage-20191211-q2farliuxvdcbsdzf6jq745za-story.html>.

³⁰ “Welcome to America’s Catholic Church: Plan Your Visit,” National Shrine, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.nationalshrine.org/visit/>; “San Juan, Texas: Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle National Shrine.,” Catholic Travel Guide, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://thecatholictravelguide.com/destinations/u-s-a/san-juan-texas-basilica-lady-san-juan-del-valle-national-shrine/>.

³¹ Irene S. Levine, “A little church in New Mexico with some big healing power,” *The Washington Post*, April 10, 2014, accessed December 17, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/travel/a-little-church-in-new-mexico-with-some-big-healing-power/2014/04/10/6989ca34-b9bf-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08_story.html.

³² Michael R. Heinlein, “Get to know 10 American minor basilicas,” *Our Sunday Visitor*, July 17, 2020, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://osvnews.com/2020/07/17/get-to-know-10-american-minor-basilicas/>; “There’s a new national shrine dedicated to St. Therese of Lisieux,” Catholic News Agency, October 5, 2016, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/34684/theres-a-new-national-shrine-dedicated-to-st-therese-of-lisieux>.

miraculous medals and currently receives 68,000 visitors annually from around the world, or the Saint Anthony Chapel in Pittsburgh, a shrine whose collection of 5,000 relics makes it the world's second largest collection of Christian relics (beat only by the Vatican) and currently gets 30,000 visitors per year, or due to American Catholic heritage, such as the uninhabited St. Clement's Island off the coast of Maryland, the location of the first Catholic Mass in the English colonies, or San Miguel Chapel in Santa Fe, one of if not the oldest church structures in use in the contiguous United States.³³ Another pilgrimage site, that combines the categories of basilica, cathedral, national shrine, and American Catholic heritage site is the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore. More commonly known as the Baltimore Basilica, this basilica was the first Catholic cathedral built in the United States and is now the co-cathedral of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. It receives 100,000 visitors per year.³⁴

However, as of yet, unlike in Lourdes none of these pilgrimage sites are the main economic drivers in their towns, with no shops or other infrastructure existing outside of the pilgrimage site or complex, nor do they have centuries-old established pilgrimages such as

³³ Steve Graham and Leo Alvarez, "Germantown Shrine of the Miraculous Medal attracts pilgrims from around the world," WHYY, April 4, 2016, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://whyy.org/articles/germantown-shrine-of-the-miraculous-medal-attracts-pilgrims-from-around-the-world/>; "The Miraculous Medal Shrine Home Page," The Miraculous Medal Shrine, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://miraculousmedal.org/welcome/the-miracle-of-the-miraculous-medal/>; Kevin Kirkland, "Grouping of 5 shrines aims to draw Catholics, visitors," *Post-Gazette*, May 20, 2019, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.post-gazette.com/news/faith-religion/2019/05/20/Shrines-Pittsburgh-grouping-Catholic-relics-holy-stairs-Pope-John-Paul/stories/201905200044>; "St. Clement's Island Museum," St. Mary's County, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/stclementsland/>; Zelda Caldwell, "The oldest church in the U.S. is the Catholic San Miguel Chapel in Santa Fe," *Aleteia*, August 28, 2019, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://aleteia.org/2019/08/28/the-oldest-church-in-the-u-s-is-the-catholic-san-miguel-chapel-in-santa-fe/>.

³⁴ Erik Zygmunt, "Baltimore Basilica: Illuminating two centuries of church history," *Catholic Review*, May 17, 2021, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://catholicreview.org/baltimore-basilica-illuminating-two-centuries-of-church-history/>; "Tours," America's First Cathedral, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.americasfirstcathedral.org/tours/>.

Santiago de Compostela. Instead, as of now, some have more extensive pilgrimage services on their own grounds, such as the National Shrine of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle, which has its own hotel, cafeteria, and giftshop, while others, such as the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, just have on-site (and online) giftshops.³⁵

The number of potential and planned pilgrimage places is growing too, as more Americans are beatified and canonized. One such person is Blessed Stanley Rother, an American priest who while serving as a missionary in Guatemala was killed in his church's rectory in 1981. With Pope Francis's declaration that Rother is a "martyr for the faith," Rother is now the first American martyr and first beatified US-born priest. A \$40 million project is currently being undertaken in Oklahoma City to build the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine. Complete with a 34-foot-tall 45,000-pound dome, the shrine will feature a 2,000-seat church, which will be the largest Catholic church in Oklahoma, as well as the chapel where Rother will be entombed. The shrine will also have a ministry building and a pilgrim center, the former including classroom and gathering space and administrative offices, while the latter includes an orientation room, a museum, and a gift shop. The construction of this shrine is expected to be completed in the summer of 2022, with the plan, or at least hope, that this shrine will welcome visitors from all around the world.³⁶

³⁵ "Pilgrim Services," Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.olsjbasilica.org/pilgrim-services>.; "About National Shrine Shops," National Shrine Shops, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.nationalshrineshops.com/about-national-shrine-shops>.

³⁶ Carla Hinton, "Construction on the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine project continues in south OKC," *The Oklahoman*, November 23, 2021, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.oklahoman.com/story/news/religion/2021/11/23/oklahoma-city-blessed-stanley-rother-shrine-project-construction-continues/6199481001/>; "Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine," Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://archokc.org/shrine>.

There are also already resources in place to assist potential pilgrims in finding and going on pilgrimages. For example, there is 206 Tours, a tour business that specializes in Catholic pilgrimages. Its destinations include holy sites all around the world, including the United States. Their five American tours are: the Washington D.C. area, the California Missions, the Santa Fe area, the "Kentucky Holy Land", and Wisconsin.³⁷ There is also the Catholic nonprofit organization Modern Catholic Pilgrim, whose mission is to “deepen faith and build community across the United States through walked pilgrimage in the Catholic tradition.” With their vision being that “a person could walk outside their home and set off on a pilgrimage to any Catholic holy site in the United States and stay with hosts each night of the journey,” Modern Catholic Pilgrim helps prepare pilgrims and get them to any American Catholic holy site, while expanding a hospitality network of parishes, Catholic campus ministries, and lay persons that host the pilgrims on their pilgrimages.³⁸ A third resource, for the pilgrim who wants to do things independently or more casually, the book *Monuments, Marvels, and Miracles: A Traveler's Guide to Catholic America* by Marion Amberg lists over 500 Catholic sites that people can visit, from towering cathedrals to tiny chapels, and from elaborate grottos to roadside statues, in the United States.³⁹ Finally, there are also websites, such as The Catholic Travel Guide and Catholic Pilgrimage Sites, as well as news articles, predominately from Catholic news services, that list and describe Catholic pilgrimage sites in the United States.⁴⁰

³⁷ “206 Tours Home Page,” 206 Tours, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.206tours.com/>.

³⁸ “Mission Statement and Rationale,” Modern Catholic Pilgrimage, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.moderncatholicpilgrim.com/mission-statement-and-rationale>.

³⁹ Marion Amberg, *Monuments, Marvels, and Miracles: A Traveler's Guide to Catholic America* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 2021), 11, 28, 53, 100, 113.

⁴⁰ “The Catholic Travel Guide Home Page,” The Catholic Travel Guide, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://thecatholictravelguide.com/>; “Catholic Pilgrimage Sites Home Page,” Catholic Pilgrimage Sites, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://catholicpilgrimagesites.wordpress.com/>.

Overall, despite a lack in pilgrimage heritage in the United States, with the rise in American interest in pilgrimage, a growing number of Catholics in the world, existing places of American pilgrimage, incoming places of pilgrimage, and some resources already in place, there is great potential in American pilgrimage. To capitalize on this potential, the American pilgrimage sites can look towards Europe for lessons and steps.

Potential Lessons and Steps

One lesson that American pilgrimage sites, and the towns they reside in, can take from Lourdes is to diversify, in multiple ways. First, a town with a pilgrimage site must not solely rely on that to stimulate the economy. As with any town that has only one engine that drives the economy, towns that rely solely on a single pilgrimage site are at risk if or when people stop visiting for whatever reason, such as a pandemic. Cities such as Washington, D.C. or New York City, whose main economic engines lie outside of the religious sites and are therefore not reliant on them, are not as much at risk. However, for smaller towns, such as Champion, Wisconsin, where the National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help is located, and Chimayó, New Mexico, the location of the El Santuario de Chimayó shrine, sustainable development should use the pilgrimage sites as one component in a development plan, not the sole sustaining force of the town's economy.

For pilgrimage sites, this diversity should include diversifying their audience. Out of the 350,000 that walked the Santiago de Compostela, only 28% walked the Camino for religious or spiritual reasons, while 28.2% wanted a challenge and to test themselves, 17.8% walked the Camino "to get away from their daily life and connect with nature," 10% walked for health and

exercise, and 4.6% did the pilgrimage to learn more about culture.⁴¹ Evidently, there is a great demand by a wide array of people with different interests and beliefs. This is not just applicable to Europeans, but Americans as well, which Dr. James Mills also points out. Dr. Mills believes that there is “a great opportunity to meet the demand by creating domestic pilgrimages not only for personal healing, but also to construct walking pathways that could, I believe, help heal entire communities or even the country.” He gives an idea to form regional networks of local pilgrimage routes that would “encourage interfaith and intergroup communication,” citing the British Pilgrimage Trust, an organization viewing pilgrimages “as a form of cultural heritage that promotes holistic well being.”⁴² The Modern Catholic Pilgrimage organization has already begun to form pilgrimage networks for Catholic sites and Catholic pilgrims. There definitely appears to be a desire for more pilgrimage routes and networks, so there is a market for more Catholic networks and the creation of non-Catholic ones that pilgrimage sites can and even need to tap into.

Another idea when it comes to diversifying an audience would be to adapt the sites themselves to a wider arrange of pilgrims, not just in programs, such as Lourdes is doing, but also in their physical fabric and design. At Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, currently being restored due to the 2019 fire, the Archdiocese of Paris has had a plan approved that involves moving around the cathedral’s furniture, installing contemporary artworks, and using new lighting effects, as well as rearrange the tabernacle and other items so that visitors have more room. The priest in charge of this interior reworking, Father Gilles Drouin, states that the goal was to preserve Notre-Dame as a religious place, but while enabling it to welcome and inform

⁴¹ Roland, “7 reasons why people walk the Camino de Santiago Pilgrimage.”

⁴² James Mills, “The US has never had much of a pilgrimage tradition – perhaps now is the opportunity.”

the public "who are not always from a Christian culture".⁴³ The rector, Msgr. Patrick Chauvet, gave further reasons for the proposals, such as allowing for "an easier and more pleasant visit" and "a dialogue" between the cathedral's medieval architecture and modern features. He also states that "the idea is that the faithful, or visitors, are first struck by the grandeur, by the beauty of Notre-Dame."⁴⁴ Of course, though, this plan does bring controversy. There has been outrage and criticism over the plans for Notre-Dame, with one news source calling it a "woke Disney revamp" while 100 French public figures gave signed on to an open letter opposing the proposals, with them and many others online seeing the proposals too modern to be in line with the medieval character of this treasured monument of cultural heritage. Evidently, when it comes to modifying the fabric and design of pilgrimage sites, particularly when the sites are historic, beloved, and architecturally significant, such as Notre-Dame, those in charge must be very careful to follow best historic preservation practices as to not damage or destroy the historic fabric and character of pilgrimage sites, which may be what attracts visitors in the first place, while making changes to encourage and facilitate the arrival of new visitors and the continuation of the site. Based on the arguments in favor of and against the plan for Notre-Dame's reworking, it seems debatable if these plans fit this preservation and development ideal. As the cathedral's restoration is ongoing as of writing this paper, it remains to be seen what the final result of the reworking will be, how it will impact the historic fabric and character of the cathedral, and how it will impact on the cathedral's visitation and visitors.

⁴³ Sandra Biffot-Lacut, "Notre-Dame in Paris denies redesign is too radical," AFP, November 29, 2021, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://news.yahoo.com/notre-dame-paris-denies-redesign-103219421.html>.

⁴⁴ Constant Méheut, "Modernization of Notre-Dame Interior Gets Green Light," *The New York Times*, December 10, 2021, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/10/arts/design/notre-dame-contemporary-art.html>.

However, still, by formulating new programs and delicately and carefully reworking pilgrim spaces, while being considerate of existing religious meaning and historic fabric and their existing cultural significance and value, American pilgrimage sites can connect with the diversity of beliefs and reasons for pilgrimage that Americans, and others, have. To aid in the designing of these new programs and the possible reworking of existing pilgrim spaces or the creation of new ones, just as Lourdes has done, American pilgrimage sites should evaluate those that currently visit the site and the changes in the demographics and patterns of these visitors, as well as current trends such as dechristianization in some places in the world, the rise of Catholics elsewhere, and the changes in reason as to why people pilgrimage, to understand what changes need to be made and which type of people they must design for.

In terms of diversifying the method of engagement, the pandemic has shown the power that the internet has in engaging with the populace. Lourdes was able to get 13 times more people to engage in a virtual pilgrimage than the number who pilgrimage to the shrine in person, perhaps reflecting what Dr. Mills mentioned in terms of barriers to physical international pilgrimage. The creators of the ¡Buen Camino! website have also seen the power of the internet, hence the creation of the project. American pilgrimage sites would do well to further their online presence in order to reach others who may not know the sites exist, compete with the more famous and popular European sites, and to reach people who may not be able to travel to the shrine but still wish to engage with their American sites, whether it is because they are international and cannot make it to the US or if they are Americans who are unable to travel. In addition, this online presence could also help during times of pandemic when people are unable to travel and the tourism industry is facing difficult times, as it would still mean engagement with people and thus potentially help with fundraising. This is why Lourdes set up the virtual

pilgrimage-to get itself out of a \$9 million deficit.⁴⁵ Evidently, since it got 13 times more people engaging than in a typical year, this virtual pilgrimage was quite successful. In the U.S., St. Patrick’s Cathedral could have benefited from doing a virtual pilgrimage. St. Patrick’s Cathedral faced a \$4 million budget shortfall in 2020 due to the pandemic, since it relied on tourists and office workers at Masses and in the gift shop, and could not conduct tradition fundraising activities such as dinners. The cathedral has had to resort to begging for money.⁴⁶ Having an established online presence could help with avoiding such financial problems during catastrophic global events, and, as the rector of Lourdes mentioned, also “create a desire for pilgrims to return” once they are able to travel again.⁴⁷

Finally, as seen with Santiago de Compostela, collaboration is important and can be extremely beneficial. When working together, local or regional governments and religious bodies can generate substantial development and tourism. Of course, as the United States of America has no state religion, any city, state, or federal governmental body has to be careful not to be seen as encouraging or favoring specific religious beliefs. However, as long as the governmental organizations focus on the economic, secular, and cultural non-religious heritage side of pilgrimages, while leaving the Church to focus on the religious and religious heritage aspects and promotion, as in Santiago de Compostela, there can be great economic investment and development from such collaboration without much, if any, controversy or criticism.

⁴⁵ Chris O’Brien, “France Travel: Lourdes Holds First Online Pilgrimage As City Fights To Save Tourism,” *Forbes*, July 16, 2020, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chrisobrien/2020/07/16/lourdes-holds-first-online-pilgrimage-as-city-fights-to-save-religious-tourism-business/>.

⁴⁶ Liam Stack, “With Tourists Gone, St. Patrick’s Cathedral Pleads for Help.”

⁴⁷ Mary Winston Nicklin, “France’s most famous pilgrimage site plans a new tourism future,” *National Geographic*.

In addition, like with ¡Buen Camino!, where there was more than two collaborators and an existing platform-Google Arts and Culture-was used, collaboration can and should also include other organizations, including existing pilgrimage organizations, networks, and tour groups such as 206 Tours and the Modern Catholic Pilgrim. These organizations and businesses already have infrastructure in place and possess experience and expertise that can assist in the development and running of pilgrimage sites and routes. While 206 Tours specializes in Catholic pilgrimages the business will “customize a pilgrimage for any Christian Denomination,” so this company could be partnered with for non-Catholic Christian pilgrimages as well.⁴⁸ However, since Modern Catholic Pilgrim is Catholic, and both 206 Tours and the Modern Catholic Pilgrim are religious in focus, new organizations and networks would need to be made for non-Catholics and non-Catholic focused pilgrimages, to make sure to reach the growing non-religious pool of pilgrims. For these non-religious organizations, networks, and tours, partnerships could be made with historic preservation groups, public and private schools, art-related groups, environmental groups, and local and region history groups, as well as immigrant groups that, like with the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, are especially culturally connected to shrines of specific saints. Finally, as Dr. Mills advocates for, these Catholic and non-Catholic organizations and networks could also partner together to form regional networks that would “encourage interfaith and intergroup communication.”⁴⁹ There is already an example of a local network of Catholic shrines in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, where five churches, including the aforementioned St. Anthony Shrine, were grouped into a “Shrines of Pittsburgh” group in an effort “to promote them

⁴⁸ “206 Tours Home Page,” 206 Tours, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.206tours.com/>.

⁴⁹ James Mills, “The US has never had much of a pilgrimage tradition – perhaps now is the opportunity.”

as places of pilgrimage and prayer,” as often visitors who visit one don’t know about the others.⁵⁰ Therefore, there could exist larger, interfaith networks as well.

Finally, this collaboration must include other stakeholders, such as business owners and citizens in the local communities. As seen with the towns on the Camino, pilgrimages can, but do not always assist in economic development. In addition, pilgrimages can have negative effects, such as overcrowding, and therefore when working on developing pilgrimages and encouraging economic development those in the community who may feel any adverse effects should be consulted to try and mitigate these effects. These other stakeholders can also include landholders. While potential pilgrimage routes may involve exclusively traveling over public roads and sidewalks, particularly as Americans tend to be rather protective over their private property, with some pilgrims interested in the environmental and nature side of pilgrimages, and with pilgrimages seen as a way of getting away from modern life and its stressors, it may be beneficial to have pilgrimage routes that go off the beaten path. Easements between landowners and pilgrimage sites, networks, and/or specific tour groups could be one way to achieve this goal.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has looked at two different Catholic pilgrimage routes outside the United States. The first was Santiago de Compostela, a pilgrimage involving not just a medieval holy site-in this case a cathedral-but a well-established network of pilgrimage routes across Spain. The second was the Sanctuary of Lourdes, a shrine complex located in a city that has developed due to the pilgrimage, and, up to now, became completely dependent on it. While

⁵⁰ Kevin Kirkland, “Grouping of 5 shrines aims to draw Catholics, visitors.”

the pilgrimage tradition in the United States is not historically very strong, with a growing number of sites and pilgrims there is great potential for these pilgrimage places to grow in popularity and help drive economic development in their towns and regions. To encourage sustainable development, American pilgrimage sites and the towns they reside in can learn from European ones in terms of essential nature of diversifying their economic engines, the pilgrims who visit, and the method of engagement, as well as the impact that Church-government cooperation can have. With all of this potential, and European examples to learn from and follow, there should be no reason why American pilgrimage sites can't become more prominent and aid in sustainable development in this country, and why pilgrimage routes can't emerge within the United States that can spread this development outward to areas outside of the pilgrimage site. After all, the great American road trip has for decades been a signature part of American life and cultural heritage-why not now have the great American pilgrimage?

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