

PILGRIMAGES AND SHRINES: A RECOGNITION LONG DELAYED

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Since Pope Boniface VIII instituted the first Holy Year in 1300, pilgrimage has been a part of the Holy Year observance. The few extant ecclesial statements referring to pilgrimage were usually issued as part of the announcements of the "holy years." In the document announcing the Great Jubilee of 2000, *Mysterium Incarnationis (MI)*, John Paul II wrote, "In the course of its history, the institution of the Jubilee has been enriched by signs which attest to the faith and foster the devotion of the Christian people. Among these, the first is the notion of pilgrimage, which is linked to the situation of man who readily describes his life as a journey" (*MI*, 7). Although the journey motif is central to pilgrimage, Christian history always included a goal for pilgrimage, a place considered holy, for example, the centers of Christianity—Jerusalem, Rome—or a shrine. From relative neglect in academic circles, pilgrimage and shrines have in the last forty years assumed a greater role in Catholic consciousness, especially in the Great Jubilee 2000. Here we purpose to outline the development of pilgrimage in Christian history, and then to review how, in recent years, both pilgrimage and shrines have received some ecclesial and theological recognition, not only as part of popular devotion but also for their importance in catechesis and evangelization.

1- Pilgrimage in Historical Perspective

Pilgrimage—images of which are present throughout the Bible—was part of Christianity long before the institution of

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the first Holy Year in 1300. In the early centuries, there is evidence of a widespread desire to visit the land of Christ's birth.¹ A notable account is the "Journal of Egeria," which recounts a pilgrimage from western Europe to the Holy Land; Egeria's journal contains a valuable description of liturgical celebrations in Jerusalem which occurred about 384.² Pilgrimage arose spontaneously in the early Church, without official encouragement. The few extant statements from early writers seem to question the practice, more than to encourage it. (See, for example, the reservations about pilgrimage expressed by Gregory of Nyssa.³) The burial sites of martyrs became the first goals of pilgrimage in the Christian West. Reports of healing contributed to the fame of a pilgrimage site. Miracles attributed to St. Martin (d. 397) made Tours a center of pilgrimage in fifth-century Gaul. In the fourth and fifth centuries, Rome was considered the Holy City because of the tombs of the apostles, its many martyrs and the catacombs. From about the sixth century, bishops made pilgrimage to Rome *ad limina apostolorum*.

In the early middle ages, pilgrimage was focused on the veneration of relics which were contained in the major centers of the Christian world—Rome, Compostela, Canterbury, Cologne, and Mount-Saint-Michel. Almost every diocese had a place of pilgrimage in honor of its patron saints. Beginning in the eleventh century, and especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the great medieval Marian shrines—many of them with Gothic cathedrals—appeared: Notre-Dame de Chartres, Notre-Dame du

¹For a general history of pilgrimage in Christianity, see Jean Chelini and Henry Branthomme, *Les chemins de Dieu: Histoire des pèlerinages Chrétiens des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Hachette, 1982).

²Cf. *Egerie: Journal de Voyage* (Itinéraire), ed. by Pierre Marval, *Sources Chrétiennes* 296 (Paris: Cerf, 1982).

³"When the Lord invites the blest to their inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, He does not include a pilgrimage to Jerusalem amongst their good deeds; when He announces the Beatitudes, He does not name amongst them that sort of devotion" (from "The Early Church Fathers and Other Works," originally published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. in Edinburgh, Scotland, beginning in 1867; LNPF11/V, Schaff and Wace). The digital version is by The Electronic Bible Society, P.O. Box 701356, Dallas, TX 75370, 214-407-WORD.

Puy, Notre-Dame de Clermont, Notre-Dame de Boulogne in France; Notre Dame de Montserrat in Catalonia. Others which originated a little later were Our Lady of Walsingham in England and Marizell in Austria. Notre-Dame de Rocamadour was the most popular site of pilgrimage in the twelfth century; the "book of miracles" from Rocamadour was written about 1172.⁴ A significant Marian pilgrimage route was the road between Le Puy and Rocamadour.⁵

In the middle ages, a ritual of pilgrimage developed. Pilgrimages were often undertaken as a result of a vow pronounced in time of great personal need or undertaken as a type of penance. Before leaving for a long and, frequently, dangerous journey, pilgrims settled their affairs and designated those who would inherit their possessions. The rights of pilgrims were recognized in such bequests. Pilgrims wore a distinctive garb, and they were welcomed at designated hospices. At the site of pilgrimage, after the veneration of relics and other devotional practices, pilgrims sometimes left a testimony of their visit in the form of an *ex-voto* (an object testifying to a favor received or a "gift" related to a vow). Small devotional objects were taken from the shrine for family members and friends who could not make the pilgrimage.

In the late medieval period, criticism of pilgrimages and shrines appears in the literature of the "pre-reformers." A recurring theme is that some undertake pilgrimage for the wrong reasons, for example, to escape work and family responsibilities.⁶ Increasingly, the literature of the period portrayed the conduct of pilgrims in a way that left much to be desired. *The Imitation of Christ* questioned whether pilgrims were truly interested in attaining holiness.⁷

⁴Cf. *Les Miracles de Notre-Dame de Rocamadour au XIIe siècle*, avec une introduction et des notes historiques et géographiques par Edmond Albe (Toulouse: Le Peregrinateur, 1996).

⁵See map, Chelini et Branthomme, *Les chemins*, 176.

⁶"Some man will go to Jerusalem, Rome or St. James of Compostela, where he has no business, abandoning his wife and children at home" (Desiderius Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 78).

⁷"Qui multum peregrinantur, raro santificantur" (*De Imitatione Christi*, 1, 33 [Paris: Treuttel et Wurtz, 1826], 60).

The Protestant reformers were opposed to pilgrimages undertaken in fulfillment of a vow or for penitential reasons. Luther early objected to pilgrimage as a type of "good work" by which people sought to save themselves, rather than to rely on the merits of Jesus Christ.⁸ Calvin denounced pilgrimage as a type of "false piety," and Zwingli forbade pilgrimage to the shrine of the Black Virgin at Einsiedeln, where he was once chaplain. Many shrines, especially those associated with the veneration of relics and images of the saints, suffered from the iconoclastic outbursts of some parts of the Reformation. Sixteenth-century England witnessed the violent destruction of the shrines and images in churches.⁹

After the Reformation, pilgrimage and shrines began a slow recovery in Catholic areas. The Council of Trent sanctioned the veneration of images and indulgences. Pilgrimage, especially to Jerusalem, was part of the spiritual program which Ignatius of Loyola bequeathed to the Society of Jesus. The victory of the Christian forces at the Battle of Lepanto (1571), and the papal encouragement of the Rosary devotion, provided an atmosphere favorable to Marian devotion. Mary, as Help of Christians (*Auxilium Christianorum*) was invoked as the Church's protectress in time of peril. Chapels were dedicated to Our Lady of Victory, notably one at Ingolstadt in 1571. In Prague, a former Lutheran church, dedicated to Our Lady of Victory, was the origin of the devotion to the Infant Jesus of Prague. The shrine of Our Lady at Benoit-Vaux (Lorraine) was considered a protection against Swedish invasions. The Holy House of Loreto continued as a popular site of pilgrimage in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, visited even by René Descartes¹⁰

Neither the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment nor the Jansenists were favorable toward pilgrimage or shrines, especially the legends associated with the latter. The *Encyclopedia*

⁸"An Open Utter to the Christian Nobility," in Martin Luther, *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 60.

⁹Cf. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of We Altars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 439-480.

¹⁰Chelini et Branthomme, *Les chemins*, 249.

(of Voltaire) referred to pilgrimage "as a journey of devotion badly understood." In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century reform Catholicism, there was a rightful concern to avoid manifestations of devotion which could be interpreted as superstitious (as evidenced in the work of Adam Eidenfeldt's *Wholesome Advices from the Blessed Virgin: To Her Indiscrete Worshippers*, [1687]). With the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773 and the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, pilgrimage experienced a notable decline.

Pilgrimage was revived in the nineteenth century. Leo XII declared 1825 a Holy Year, the first since 1775. He encouraged pilgrimage by daily receiving and serving twelve pilgrims at his table. In a short while, the apparitions of the Virgin Mary at Rue du Bac (1830), La Salette (1846), Lourdes (1858), would influence the development of shrines and pilgrimage in France and would have repercussions throughout the Catholic world. What is notable about the nineteenth-century revival of pilgrimage is the dominant, though not exclusive, role of the Marian shrines.¹¹ The introduction of the railroad in France, in 1848, facilitated the organization of large-group pilgrimage.

The growth of pilgrimage in mid-century France was not unrelated to the political situation in France. Pilgrimage and shrines, a seeming continuation of a medieval practice, stood in stark contrast to the scientific certitude of nineteenth-century medicine and the secular tendencies of the republican government. As a consequence of the Franco-Prussian war and the uprising of the Paris Commune in 1870, many felt the need for a repentance and return to France's Christian origins. La Salette had become the first great center of pilgrimage, promoted by Bishop Emanuel d'Alzon and the Assumptionists. Soon, however, Lourdes would surpass La Salette as the site of national pilgrimage.¹²

In 1873, the Assumptionists founded at Paris the Association of Notre-Dame-de-Salut, which had a wide-ranging social and political program designed to revitalize Catholicism in France.

¹¹In the mid-nineteenth century, St. John Vianney's Ars attracted many visitors.

¹²Cf. Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (New York: Viking, 1999), 210-223.

A major part of the program was the organization of national pilgrimages. Vigorously promoted by the Assumptionist Father Picard, 1873 was designated as the "Great Year of Pilgrimage," with major pilgrimages to the three national centers: Chartres, Paray-le-Monial, Lourdes, and two international sites: Jerusalem and Rome.

The wars of the first half of the twentieth century curtailed pilgrimage in Europe. With the arrival of air transportation in the post-World War II era, North Americans began visiting the great European sites of pilgrimage. The worldwide popularity of St. Therese, the Little Flower, brought many pilgrims to Lisieux, where the basilica was dedicated in 1937. After both World Wars, Lourdes took on a role of reconciliation, as it welcomed former German soldiers and individuals who had been displaced by the war.¹³ The international Catholic peace organization, Pax Christi, was established at Lourdes in 1946.

Pilgrimage to the shrines usually increased during the Holy Years and during the special commemorative years.¹⁴ The following are numbers reported visiting shrines in 1999: Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, 14.8 million; Santiago de Compostela, 10 million; San Giovanni Rotondo in Italy, 7.8 million; Nossa Senhora Aparecida, 7.8 million; Fatima, 5.3 million; Lourdes, 5.2 million; Czestochowa, 4.8 million; Loreto, 4.6 million. (At the time this article was written, the numbers visiting shrines in the Grand Jubilee 2000 were not yet available.)

2. Ecclesial and Theological Recognition of the Shrines

The principal references to pilgrimage and shrines in ecclesial documents were usually contained in the announcement of the Holy Year. Diocesan bishops encouraged pilgrimage by designating local churches where the Holy Year indulgence might

¹³Similarly, the Marian Shrine, "Comforter of the Afflicted," at Kevelaer, Germany, welcomed French soldiers. In 1948, Bishop Pierre Marie Theas of Lourdes, one of the founders of Pax Christi, came as a pilgrim of reconciliation to Lourdes. The first Pax Christi meeting was held at Kevelaer in 1949. To commemorate the event, there is a Pax Christi chapel at Lourdes containing a Lamp of Peace, first lit in 1949.

¹⁴For example, pilgrims to Lourdes numbered 2,400,000 in 1950 (the Holy Year); 2,595,000 in 1954 (the Marian Year); 4,812,000 in 1958 (the Lourdes Year).

be obtained. Aside from these references, and the sponsorship of diocesan pilgrimages, little ecclesial attention was given to pilgrimage and shrines. In academic theology, neither pilgrimage nor shrines were given any recognition, and their existence was not even acknowledged. Neither the 1918 Code of Canon Law nor Vatican Council II referred to shrines (although the council, especially in *Lumen gentium*'s seventh chapter, did much to restore the consciousness of a Pilgrim Church).

Shrines were usually autonomous entities, subject only to a local church or organization which maintained them. The relation of the shrine to the local parish and diocese was not clear, and jurisdictional disputes were not uncommon. Some shrines were maintained by religious orders which were exempt from diocesan authority. A type of papal recognition was given to a shrine when its church was elevated to the status of a basilica or when papal permission was given for the canonical coronation of an image of the Virgin Mary at the shrine. A first attempt to define a "shrine" occurred during the pontificate of Pius XII, when some way was needed to determine which churches were subject to the diocesan tax, even if they were attached to exempt religious houses. (One element in this early definition—namely, that a shrine was "the object of pilgrimage by the faithful"—was retained and eventually incorporated in the Code of Canon Law [1983]).¹⁵

It was only in the mid-twentieth century that organizations of pilgrimage and shrine directors were established. In France, the *Association nationale des directeurs de pelegrinage* (ANDP) was founded in 1938. In preparation for the centenary of Lourdes, the *Association* undertook in 1954 a program of studies exploring pilgrimage from a theological, pastoral, and devotional viewpoint. In 1959, the *Association des*

¹⁵A shrine is a church or sacred building dedicated to the public exercise of divine worship, which, for reasons of particular devotion (e.g., because a sacred image is venerated there, because an important relic is kept there, because of a miracle that God worked there, because a special indulgence can be obtained) is the object of pilgrimage by the faithful" (Joseph Fox, O.P., "Notes on the Canonical Status of Shrines," *Notitiae* [April 1992/4]: 309). Cf. J. Palazzini, "Santuaria Pontificia," "Sanctuarium," in *Dictionarium morale et canonicum*.

Recteurs de Sanctuaires (ARS) was founded to deal with the common interests of directors of shrines.¹⁶ Also in 1959, *Collegamenta Mariana* was founded at Rome; it was to be a comprehensive Marian organization, including Marian associations, centers, periodicals, movements, and shrines. The headquarters was located in Rome's *Santuario della Madonna del Divino Amore*,

The first meeting of rectors of shrines in Italy occurred in 1965. It was there that Paul VI reminded the rectors, "In the code of canon law, the word *sanctuary* {*shrine*) does not occur. Let the sanctuaries get up and cry out, 'We exist. We exist and have a role. A role which is integral and pastoral'" (1-12-1966). The pope asked the rectors to strive to make the shrines attractive centers of a Marian devotion developed according to Vatican II's directives. The meeting formulated a request that the sanctuaries be included in upcoming revision of canon law.¹⁷ Future meetings of the rectors of Italian shrines were devoted to a variety of pastoral, spiritual, liturgical, and ecumenical themes related to shrines—liturgy, catechesis, sacraments, evangelization, aesthetics, works of charity.¹⁸ Many of the themes developed at these meetings would later appear in ecclesial documents dealing with shrines and pilgrimage.

¹⁶Rene Laurentin, *Pelerinage, sanctuaires, apparitions: Annee Sainte 1983-1984: Redecouvrir la religion populaire* (Paris: O.E.I.L., 1983), 60. The ARS disbanded in 1969-70, in a controversy over the practice of communal absolution at shrines.

¹⁷Cf. Gaetano Me solo, "Il 1 [Primo] Convegno dei Rettori dei Santuari Mariani d'Italia," *La Madonna*, 14/1 (gennaio-febbraio, 1966): 2-6.

¹⁸The first meetings dealt with the pastoral ministry/activity at the shrines (1965-66); integrating the role of shrines (1967); pastoral ministry at Marian shrines (1968); pastoral ministry and liturgy and shrines (1969); secularization and shrines (1970); response of Marian shrines to the papal letter of May 1, 1971; liturgical activity and pastoral service at shrines, 1972; shrines on the level of evangelization (1973); sacrament of reconciliation at Marian shrines (1974); Marian feasts at shrines, after the spirit of *Marialis cultus* (1975); Mary in popular devotion (1976); Mary in popular hymns (1977); shrines and popular devotion (1978); shrines and ministry to the suffering (1979); religious and social tourism at shrines (1980); Marian consecration and the spiritual life (1981); Mary and Eucharist in the pilgrim community at shrines (1982); shrines in the new code of canon law (1983).

In his annual addresses to the rectors of shrines, Paul VI continued to develop the role of shrines and their pastoral function. He referred to shrines as "spiritual clinics" (1965), "witnesses to miraculous deeds and to a continuous wave of devotion" (1966), "luminous stars in the Church's heaven" (1970), "places which recall the presence of the invisible" (1971), "gems and precious stones of spirituality in the church" (1974). (Unfortunately, Paul VI's descriptions of shrines were not included in later documents.) Paul VI spoke of the liturgical and pastoral role of shrines. The highpoint of pilgrimage was to be the liturgy at the shrine. At shrines, "the means of salvation are abundantly offered."¹⁹ Shrines were to be seen within the context of the diocesan and parish life, where they were to play a collaborative, integrative, and occasionally substitutive role.²⁰

Other factors contributed to a heightened consciousness of pilgrimage in the postconciliar church. The popes promoted pilgrimage by their personal example—Paul VI's visit to the World Council of Churches in Geneva and to the United Nations in New York, and both Paul VI's and John Paul II's pilgrimages to Jerusalem. *Evangelii nuntiandi* (EN), from the 1975 Synod of Bishops on evangelization, rehabilitated expressions of popular devotion, referring to them as "particular expressions of the search for God and for faith, both in the regions where the Church has been established for centuries and where she is in the course of becoming established" (EN 48). The Puebla Document of 1978 enthusiastically described the pastoral value of pilgrimage: "Our people love pilgrimage. In them the simple Christian celebrates the joy of feeling immersed in a multitude of brothers and sisters, journeying together toward the God who is waiting for them."²¹

¹⁹Paul VI's reference to the liturgy at shrines as *punto di intensita* (1976) found its way in the 1983 Code of Canon Law as "shrines were to be places where the means of salvation were abundantly offered."

²⁰A substitutive role, in the sense that "a person who might not go to a parish will be attracted to a shrine" (1-12-1966).

²¹Cf. *Puebla and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary*, ed. by John Eagle-son and Philip Scharper (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979). "We must proceed to put more

John Paul II contributed much to promote shrines. Every papal visit includes, when possible, a visit to a Marian shrine or sanctuary. Marian shrines, he said, are "like the house of the Mother, pause-and-rest points on the long road that brings us to Christ. They are centers, where, through the simple and humble faith of the poor in spirit, one comes in contact again with the great wealth that Christ has entrusted and granted to the Church, particularly the Sacraments, grace, mercy, charity towards the suffering and sick."²² A major theme of his 1987 encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* was "Mary's pilgrimage of faith." He referred to Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fatima, Jasna Gora, and Marian shrines as a "geography of faith and Marian devotion, which includes all these special places of pilgrimage where the People of God seek to meet the Mother of God in order to find, within the radius of the maternal presence of her 'who believed,' a strengthening of their own faith."²³ A major section of the encyclical was entitled, "The Mother of God at the Center of the Pilgrim Church."

The 1983 Code of Canon Law dedicated five canons to shrines.

1) The defining characteristic of a shrine is that it is a "place of pilgrimage for the faithful" (# 1230).²⁴

2) For a shrine to be designated as *national*, the approval of the bishops' conference is required; for a shrine to be designated as *international*, the approval of the Holy See is required (#1231).

3) Shrines should have statutes which determine the purpose, the authority of the rector, the ownership and

planned effort into transforming our **sanctuaries** so that they might be 'privileged locales' of evangelization" (sec.4.1, #463).

²²Angelus address of June 21, 1987. In his homily at Zapopan in Mexico, John Paul II said, "It is necessary to cultivate with great attention and zeal the pastoral life of Marian shrines, by means of a liturgy which is participative and appropriate, a careful and adequate preaching, attention to the sacrament of penance, and pruning away of forms of religiosity which present elements less wholesome" (3-1-1979).

²³*Redemptoris Mater*, 28.

²⁴A shrine is defined as a church or holy place *ad quos, peculiarem pietatis causam, fideles frequentes, approbante Ordinario ton, peregrinantur.*

administration of the property. The local Ordinary is competent to approve the statutes of a diocesan shrine; the bishops' conference, those of a national shrine; the Holy See, alone, those of an international shrine (#1232).

4) Certain privileges may be granted to shrines when the local circumstances, the number of pilgrims, and especially the good of the faithful would seem to make this advisable (#1233).

5) "At shrines, the means of salvation are to be more abundantly made available to the faithful: by sedulous proclamation of the Word of God; by suitable encouragement of liturgical life; especially by the celebration of the Eucharist and Penance; and by the fostering of approved forms of devotion."²⁵ This canon also directs that "votive offerings of popular art and devotion are to be displayed and carefully safeguarded" (#1234).

Two events related to Marian shrines occurred during the Marian Year, 1987-88. The first was the letter from the Central Committee on the Celebration of the Marian Year (October 7, 1987)²⁶ to the rectors of Marian shrines. The role of a Marian shrine is outlined in the following five sections:

1) *The Shrine: Place of Worship.* The liturgy, which is the principal goal of pilgrimage to a Marian shrine, should be exemplary for the quality of the participation, the fidelity to the rite, the richness of the content, and the beauty of the ceremonies. Eucharistic celebrations at Marian shrines should reveal the fullness of the paschal mystery, communion with the universal Church, and the presence of Mary in word and symbol. The symbolism of pilgrimage should also be developed.

2) *The Shrine: Focus of Culture.* A Marian shrine is a center to foster cultural development. The history, traditions, and the art of the shrine should contribute to the *via pulchritudinis* and to the contemplation of God's beauty revealed in Mary.

3) *The Shrine: Place for Promoting Vocations.* A Marian shrine is a sign of the mysterious relationship between God's

²⁵"In santuariis abundantius fidelibus suppleantur media salutis."

²⁶Central Committee for the Marian Year, *The Ecclesial Role of Marian Shrines*, October 7, 1987. English text, "The Mission of Marian Shrines," *Catholic International* 10/6 (June, 1999): 278-281. Italian text, "Consilium Primarium Anno Mariali celebrando: Seconda lettera circolare ai Vescovi," *Marianum* 49 (1987): 13-23.

call and the person's response. A shrine is a place for announcing and celebrating the mystery of vocation within the Church.

4) *The Shrine: Place of Charity*. Works of charity—hospitals, schools for the poor, homes for the sick and elderly—give expression to the Lord's concern for the poor, as recalled in Mary's Magnificat, and should be part of a Marian shrine.

5) *The Shrine: Center of Ecumenism*. Since Mary's role and Marian devotion have been cited as reasons for the separation of the churches, Marian shrines should courageously assume a role of promoting ecumenical prayer, meeting, and discussion.

A second event of the Marian Year, 1987-88, related to shrines was the publication of the *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. These Mass texts, relating Mary to the different seasons of the liturgical year, were developed by the Congregation for Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, at the request of rectors of Marian shrines. Because of the frequent use at shrines of Votive Masses for those on pilgrimage, the need for more varied Marian texts, especially for those reflecting the liturgical season, was particularly acute. These Masses contain a rich tradition of Marian devotion, with texts drawn from many sources. This initiative of Marian shrines enriched the liturgy of the whole Church, because ecclesial communities may make use of these texts for the Saturday Memorial of the Virgin Mary and for other times when a Marian votive Mass, in accord with the liturgical season, is sought.

3. Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Jubilee Year

The announcement of the Jubilee Year 2000 once again directed attention to the pilgrimage and shrines. Pope John Paul II's *Mysterium Incarnationis* spoke of pilgrimage as one of the distinctive features of Jubilee years.

From birth to death, the condition of each individual is that of *homo viator* . . . The history of the Church is the living account of an unfinished pilgrimage . . . Pilgrimages have always been a significant part of the life of the faithful, assuming different cultural forms in different ages. A pilgrimage evokes the believer's personal journey in the footsteps of the Redeemer; it is an exercise of practical asceticism, of repentance for human weaknesses, of constant vigilance over one's own frailty, of interior preparation for a change of heart. Through vigils, fasting and prayer, the

pilgrim progresses along the path of Christian perfection, striving to attain, with the support of God's grace, "the state of the perfect man, to the measure of the full maturity of Christ." (Eph. 4:13; *MI*, 7)

At the present time, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People has the responsibility of overseeing and directing those involved in "the Shrine and Pilgrimage Apostolate." The council sponsored the First World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Shrines and Pilgrimages,²⁷ at Rome, in 1992; the First European Congress for Shrines and Pilgrimages, at Máriaócs, Hungary, in 1996;²⁸ and the Fifth World Congress on the Pastoral Ministry to Tourism, at Ephesus, in 1998.²⁹

In preparation for the celebration of the Grand Jubilee 2000, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People issued two documents: in 1998, *The Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000*, and in the following year, a complementary document, *The Shrine*.³⁰ The two documents, as stated in the Introduction by Archbishop Stephen Fumio Hamao, were motivated by "the important role of pilgrimage and shrines in the life of the Church, demonstrated by the ever-increasing number of visitors to holy places"; they were intended to reflect the "pastoral reality of shrines and provide a valuable resource for the future developments of the Shrine and Pilgrimage Apostolate."³¹

²⁷The proceedings are found in *"Walk toward the Splendour of God: Your God Walks with You."* The conferences dealt with **popular** religion in various contexts, reports from regions and individual shrines.

²⁸Proceedings: *Les sanctuaires oil Dieu cherche l'homme* (Cite du Vatican, 1996).

²⁹Proceedings: *Los caminos de la humanidad peregrina cruzando el umbral del año 2000* (Ciudad del Vaticano, 1998).

³⁰The **Pontifical** Council for the **Pastoral** Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *The Shrine: Memorial, Presence and Prophecy of the Living God* and *The Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1999).

³¹From the "Foreward" by Archbishop Stephen Fumio Hamao.

a) First Document of the Jubilee Year: *The Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000* (1998)

The first document (*The Pilgrimage = P*) is to be an "aid to pilgrims and those in charge of the pastoral care of pilgrimages." The first two sections outline a history of pilgrimage in the Scripture and in Christian history. Sacred history refers to a number of pilgrim figures and types, all of whom have a redemptive and eschatological function: Adam, Abraham, the Exodus, the Ascent to Jerusalem, Christ's Journey to Jerusalem. "Christ's pilgrimage" means that "he includes himself in the journey of humankind and of his people, uniting himself in some way with each person." The missionary activities of the early Church are evidence of its pilgrim character. The early sites of pilgrimage were Jerusalem, Rome, Compostela. The proclamation of the first jubilee 1300 increased the importance of pilgrimage.

The third and fourth section are "Pilgrimage towards the Third Millennium" and the "Pilgrimage of Humankind." The "pilgrim church," with its Trinitarian dimensions (as outlined in *Lumen gentium* 7-9), mirrors the universal pilgrimage of humanity. The itinerary is not spatial but rather an interior and vital one, "in the re-conquest of the great values of the biblical jubilee year." There are different levels, types, and motivations for pilgrimage—some people are fleeing from oppressive situations; others seek exploration, trade, cultural values. "This complex geography of movement witnesses to a desire for a transcendent horizon of truth, justice, and peace and for a restlessness which has for its port the infinity of God" (*P*, 30).

In the last section, "Pilgrimage of the Christian Today," the specific moments of pilgrimage are recalled: departure, journey, visit, return. All pilgrimage culminates in a multi-layered encounter—the "tent of the meeting"—with the Word of God, with the Church, with Christ in the sacraments of Eucharist and of Reconciliation. The encounter includes meeting with people of other faiths and cultures, as well as with different devotional practices. Not only the God of revelation but also the God of nature can be encountered in the

beauty and atmosphere of the shrine. Mary provides the paradigm of the "tent of meeting": Her body was the first tabernacle.

b) The Second Document of the Jubilee Year: *The Shrine* (1999)

The second document (*The Shrine* = *S*) continues the theme, announced in *Pilgrimage*, that the object of pilgrimage is the "Tent of Encounter." *The Shrine* is a pastoral document, concerned with the fostering of the spiritual life at shrines, with the pastoral ministry at shrines, and with the reception by the local churches of the spiritual renewal emanating from shrines. The document is divided into three major headings: memorial, presence, and prophecy,

1) *The Shrine as Memorial* A shrine is born of divine initiative and reflects God's action in history; for that reason, it is a place of awe, adoration, and wonder (*S*, 6). The shrine has a particular appeal for those who "in the solitude of the secularized and desacralized world, perceive a yearning for and fascination of sanctity." The sentiments of gratitude characteristic of the Virgin Mary present a type of response to the gift of a shrine and also present an attitude necessary in everyday life. A shrine is a place for strengthening commitment to actions promoting human dignity, justice, and peace (*S*, 8).

2) *The Shrine, Place of the Divine Presence*. A shrine is a "place for the Word of God par excellence" (*S*, 10). It is also a privileged sacramental place, especially for the Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation. The shrine should also present catechetical programs which foster evangelization, vocational discernment, family life. Celebrations at the shrine should reflect the unity of the Church and centrality of the Eucharist (*S*, 12).

3) *The Shrine, Prophecy of the Heavenly Homeland*. A shrine is a prophetic sign of hope, a protest against worldly presumption, and an invitation to enter into a wider horizon of life. The presence of the sick and suffering at shrines is a "living icon" of this affirmation. In the *Magnificat*, sung so frequently at shrines, the Church "sees uprooted that sin which

is found at the early history of man and woman, the sin of disbelief and of 'little faith' in God." Shrines witness to the eschatological dimension of Christian faith, and attentive pastoral action can make shrines become places of "education for ethical values—particularly justice, solidarity, peace, the preservation of creation which will contribute to the growth of the quality of life for everyone" (S, 16).

Conclusion

Neither the *Pilgrimage* nor the *Shrine* claim to be comprehensive or definitive documents. They were documents written for the celebration of the Jubilee Year 2000. There is a generic character to the two documents: their observations are comprehensive—applicable to a wide range of circumstances—from a local shrine dedicated to a patron saint to the great centers of international pilgrimage. The implementation of the directives contained in the two documents will differ widely, dependent on the pastoral resources available. Nevertheless, the two documents witness to the increased importance of pilgrimage and shrines in Catholic consciousness and to the pastoral and educative role which shrines have assumed in the last forty years.

There are differences between the two documents. *The Pilgrimage* is more biblically oriented, with over one hundred Scriptural references, with some anthropological insights. Unfortunately, the abstract quality and the diffusive style of the document lessen its impact. *The Shrine* has a liturgical and sacramental orientation. Its most innovative feature may be the document's principal divisions: memorial, presence, and prophecy. The term *memorial*—in the liturgical sense of *anamnesis*—appears frequently; a shrine is a "place of *memorial*—of the powerful action of God in history," "a living *memorial* of the origin of the chosen and beloved people of the alliance," an efficacious *memorial* "of the work of God," "a permanent actualization of the love of God."

Both documents, especially *The Shrine*, offer suggestions to pastoral ministers. In addition to those related to sacramental ministry, there are recommendations dealing with the pastoral

and educative role of pilgrimage and shrines. People undertake pilgrimage and visit shrines for different reasons—devotion, leisure, culture (*P*, 41). Pastoral ministers should be aware of the various motivations, so that the pilgrimage may "contribute to the cultural enrichment and spiritual progress of travelers." Adequate preparation is necessary for understanding the shrine in its "visible, artistic, and folkloric aspects" which can be done during the stops in the itinerary leading the people to the shrine; also, a catechesis which takes into account the peculiar nature of the shrine and its specific charism is recommended (*S*, 6). The theme of evangelization should be prominent at shrines, through recourse to cultural and artistic initiatives, like congresses, seminars, exhibits, reviews, contexts and presentations on religious themes (*S*, 12). Shrines are places to "bring to maturity one's own vocation," for the fostering and strengthening of family life, for education to ethical values (*S*, 16).³²

There are some interesting references to the Virgin Mary: she is the "pilgrim companion" (*P*, 42), the "living shrine of the Word of God, the Ark of the new and eternal covenant" (*S*, 18). Had the pilgrim nature of the Church received a fuller development, a more integral relation could have been made between Mary's pilgrimage of faith and that of the Church.³³ The concluding section of the *Shrine* exhorts those responsible for liturgy to take care that "the various expressions of Marian piety ... be integrated into the liturgical life which is the center and the definition of the shrine" (*S*, 18). It is regrettable that

³²There is one reference to indulgence; Pastoral agents, who assist the pilgrims' perseverance, should, in addition, "pay special attention to the offering of the expression of the 'total gift of the mercy of God,' the indulgence" (*S*, 11).

In "Conditions for Gaining the Jubilee Indulgence," in addition to the usual pilgrimage sites for gaining the indulgence, *Mysterium Incarnationis* speaks of the "pilgrimage to Christ in the poor." The indulgence may be gained, "in any place, if they visit for a suitable time their brothers and sisters in need or in difficulty (the sick, the imprisoned, the elderly living alone, the handicapped, etc.), as if making a pilgrimage to Christ in them (cf. Mt 5:34-36)."

³³The last section of *Lumen gentium* spoke of Mary as "Sure Sign of Hope to the Pilgrim Church," and a major section of *Reclemptoris Mater* has the title "The Mother of God at the Center of the Pilgrim Church."

no mention is made here, or any other place in the two documents, of the *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, destined specifically for shrines as a way to enlarge the Scriptural and historical contexts of devotion and to integrate the Virgin Mary into the mystery of Christ celebrated throughout the liturgical year.

Lastly, one would have hoped that a document from the Pontifical Council for Refugees and Itinerants would have given greater attention to hospitality. This well-founded biblical virtue has many dimensions: the hospitality which pilgrims extend to each other on pilgrimage, the hospitality which the pilgrims receive as they arrive and during their stay at the shrine, the hospitality which the shrine offers to all classes of people (P, 39). Hospitality to pilgrims and wayfarers takes on increased significance in today's world where there are great movements of people, many of whom are uprooted and bereft of a homeland. The shrine's role of welcoming all was well expressed by John Paul II:

In a shrine a person can discover that he or she is equally loved and equally awaited, starting with the persons whom life has treated harshly, the poor, the people who are distant from the Church. Everyone can rediscover his or her eminent dignity as a son or daughter of God, even if they had forgotten it.³⁴

In a world of refugees and immigrants, reference should be made to a role shrines fulfilled in the nineteenth century, that is, as gathering places for specific groups of people. For example, Fatima or Lourdes now host pilgrimages for peoples who have been exiled from their native land.

The Marian Year 1987-88 was the occasion for the publication of a "Letter to Marian Shrines." The Grand Jubilee 2000 was the occasion for the Pontifical Council's *Pilgrimage* and the *Shrine*. Taken together, these documents present a body of resources, issued by ecclesial authorities, which provide a catechesis which situates pilgrimage within the larger context of biblical and Christian history and relates it to the great journey

³⁴*L'Osservatore Romano*, 29 March 1992.

of all peoples. The documents emphasize the educative and evangelizing role of shrines, as they situate pilgrimage and shrine within the larger context of memorial of God's action and presence with people and a prophetic sign which confounds many human values.

In the wake of Vatican Council II, shrines and pilgrimage, along with popular devotions, were in some quarters consigned to the dustbin of history. Yet, in the last forty years, interest in pilgrimage and shrines has increased. The interest may be in part attributed to the revival of interest in popular religion. But it may also indicate the thirst for spirituality which so characterizes our period. In former ages, *wanderlust*, sometimes connoting an evasion of responsibilities, was imputed to pilgrims. Today *wanderlust* might signify a deeper desire to explore life's meaning. Pilgrimage and shrines witness to the human spirit searching and exploring, anticipating communion and presence.